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THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS





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Get a Job Like These!



\$20 a Day for Schreck

"Use my name as a reference and depend on me as a booster. The biggest thing I ever did was answer your advertisement. I am averaging better than \$50 a month from my own business now. I used to make \$18 a week."

A. Schreck,
Phoenix, Arizona.



Makes \$700 in 24 Days in Radio

"Thanks to your interesting Course I made over \$700 in 24 days in Radio. Of course, this is a little above the average but I run from \$10 to \$40 clear profit every day, so you can see what your training has done for me."

Fred G. McNabb,
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Best Engineer—Pay Raised 150%

"I was a dumbbell in electricity until I got in touch with you Mr. Cooke, but now I have charge of a big plant including 60 motors and direct a force of 10 men—electricians, helpers, etc. My salary has gone up more than 150%."

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"Now I am specializing in Auto Electricity and battery work and make from \$70 to \$80 a week and I am just getting started. I don't believe there is another school in the world like yours. Your lessons are a real joy to study."

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The Big Pay Field~

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I Will Train You at Home ~ Spare time Only Needed

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It's your own fault if you don't earn more. Send the coupon and I'll prove it to you. Blame yourself if you stick to your small pay job when I have made it so easy for you to learn to earn \$3,500 to \$10,000 a year in Electricity. One billion dollars a year is being spent in electrical work. *Electrical Experts* are badly needed. Just send the coupon. Thousands of men are needed—trained as I train them. They can practically name their own salaries. Everything is ready but the men. Will you answer the call of this big-pay field? Get ready now for the big job I will help you get. The biggest money of your life is waiting for you. Send the coupon.

You Can Do It Too!

Let me show you that I can train you just like I trained the four men whose pictures you see here. Just like I have trained thousands of other men—ordinary every-day sort of fellows—lifting them up from starvation wages and starting them on the road to jobs that pay \$70.00 to \$200.00 a week. With my newly learned, spare-time course, I can fit you for one of the biggest jobs in electricity. Send the coupon and I'll tell you how.

Quick and Easy to Learn

Don't have any doubt about your being able to do what these other men have done. McNabb and Schreck and these other fellows didn't have a penny on you when they started. You can easily duplicate their success. Age, lack of experience or limited education do not bar you. Start just as you are and I will guarantee to train you at home with a signed money back guarantee bond. If you aren't 100 per cent satisfied with my course it won't cost you a cent. Mail coupon to me today.

Big Electrical Book—FREE

The coupon below will bring you my big free electrical book—over 100 interesting pictures. The real dope about your opportunities in electricity—positive proof that you, too, can learn to earn \$3,500 to \$10,000 a year. Send for it now. Send it while there's time for a better job and more money is upon you.

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The Big Pay Man ~Always

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Chicago Engineering Works
Dept. 78
2150 Lawrence Ave., Chicago

Without obligating me in any way send me your Free Book and particulars of your Electrical Outfit Offer, Employment Service and proof that you can fit me for a big-pay electrical job.

Name.....

Address.....

Occupation.....

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

November
1925

AINSLEE'S

STORIES THAT CHARM AND ALWAYS WILL

Vol. LVI
No. 3

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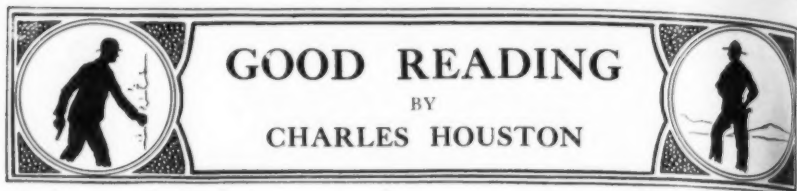
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What's your test for a good story? Isn't it one that picks you up much as a hard-riding cow-puncher swoops a hat from the ground at a rodeo and gallops you along to a breathless finish?

Between us we are not any too strong for these "highbrow, psychological" novels that are described by their publishers on the jackets as being "grim pictures of life as it is really lived," or "here we come face to face with despair and desolation painted in authentic colors," or "this book considers the deep problems that confront a sensitive soul out of tune with his surroundings."

Lately we've read quite a mess of books like these. In one of them there are four or five chapters describing with great detail the garbage that has accumulated in the back alley of a small town in Minnesota. In another we read about a nice young man who wrote nice young poetry and was shocked by the coarseness of his relatives who were in the pork-packing business in Chicago.

If that's the sort of stuff they write, that's the sort of stuff they like. But not for us. We'll take the garbage for granted, only pausing to wish that the local chamber of commerce would jack up the street-cleaning department a bit. And frankly, we don't get het up for one moment about the agonies of the nice, young man. It is our private opinion that a year's job in the pork-packing business might do him and poetry a heap of good.

No, sir, we may be lowbrows and all of that but we know what we like. And what we like is some rattling good Western story that starts with a bang and goes

along with a clatter of hoofs in a cloud of dust. Or, again, we like to sit down in the evening and start in with the detective who is looking for the gunman who shot the rich old duffer in his beautifully appointed apartment and trail along with the dick until at length we are facing the desperate murderer in a dark room at the head of a flight of rickety stairs.

When we get hold of stories like this, we can't be bothered with things like food and drink and business engagements and such trivialities. We've just got to sit there glued to our chair until we find out what happened and how it happened and when and why.

That's why we've been feeling so chipper recently, for after reading a lot of this "highbrow" stuff we have got hold of several stories that fit in with the description of our tastes in the paragraph above. They are the good-looking books published at the surprisingly low price of seventy-five cents by that all-reliable firm, Chelsea House at 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

We are here to say that this house certainly pick authors that know how to tell stories with a real thoroughbred's pace to them. There's no jog-trotting through the mud of things in these books. No, sir, the author gets going on the first page and keeps right on to the last line with you, the reader, kept breathless all around the track.

Here follow snapshots of some of the latest of these crackajack Chelsea House publications. These are only a few culled from a long list of winners. Chelsea House books all bear this brand—"CH"—and it's our hot tip to you to ask your dealer to show you the entire list—especially if you're looking for the one best bet in Christmas presents.

(Continued on 2nd page following.)

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**Now Sent
FREE!**

**How To Work
Wonders with
Words**



Not Only Men Who Have Made Millions Send for this Astonishing Book -but Thousands of Others!

Many successful business men have sent for this amazing book, NOW MAILED FREE. Such men as Walter C. Ford, of the Ford Manufacturing Company; C. F. Bourgeois, President of Robischon and Peckham Company; H. B. McNeal, President of the Telephony Publishing Company, and many other prominent, prosperous business executives are unstinting in their praise of it. But don't think it is only for big men. Thousands of young men have found in this book the key to advancement in salary and position, popularity, standing, power and real success.

Today business demands for the big, important, high-salaried men who can dominate others. It is the power of forceful, outlining speech that helps one man to jump from obscurity to the presidency of a great corporation. Another from a small, unimportant territory to the sales manager's desk. Another from the rank and file of political workers to a post of national prominence as a campaign speaker. A timid, self-conscious man to change almost overnight into a popular and much-applauded after-dinner speaker.

Either You Become a Powerful Speaker—or Your Training Is FREE

You are shown how to conquer stage-fright, self-consciousness, timidity, bashfulness and fear—those things which keep you silent when men of lesser ability get what they want by the sheer power of convincing speech. You are told how to bring out and develop your priceless "hidden knack"—which will aid in winning for you advancement in position and salary, popularity, standing, power and real success. This simple, easy, sure and quick training is guaranteed to help do this—or it will not cost you a single penny.

Only 15 Minutes a Day Required

There is no mystery about the power to work wonders with words. It makes no difference how embarrassed or self-conscious you now are when called upon to speak. Certain principles will show you how to rise head and shoulders above the mass and make yourself the dominating figure in any gathering! How to rise to any occasion and demand what you want with force, vigor and conviction. Give only fifteen minutes a day in the privacy of your own home and you can accomplish all this in a few short weeks.

Make This FREE Test

If you will fill in and mail the coupon at once you will receive

this remarkable new book, "How to Work Wonders with Words," which gives you an amazing test by which you can determine for yourself in five minutes whether you are one of the seven men out of every nine who possess the "hidden knack" of powerful speech, but do not know it. Decide

for yourself if you are going to allow fifteen minutes a day to stand between you and success. Thousands have found this to be the biggest forward step of their lives. If it has played such an important part in the lives of many big men, may it not in yours?

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City State

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THE DEMON, a Detective Story by Johnston McCulley, Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75c.

Speaking of gunmen and dicks and such, as we were a bit back, here's a story of New York's underworld denizens that whirls along at breakneck speed to a startling ending. Out of a blinding rainstorm into a room where a gangster chieftain sits boasting of his deeds steps an ominous figure in a red hood. He is the Demon, feared by even the bravest of the crooks and gunmen that prowl o' nights. Who is he? What is his mission? Why does he come into that thieves' haunt at such an hour? These are the questions that Mr. McCulley puts before you, and if there's a drop of red-blooded curiosity in your veins you won't rest content until you have finished the last chapter. We don't recommend "The Demon" as good reading for the front porch of an old ladies' home, but it has our cordial O. K. for those who love a mystery story that's very much out of the ordinary.



THE WOMAN IN MAUVE, a Love Story by Georgette MacMillan, Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75c.

She had a way of appearing under the most dramatic circumstances and then vanishing from off the face of the earth—this Woman in Mauve who so fascinated Ronald Franklin, the good-looking bachelor clubman. At first it merely puzzled him, and then he found himself involved in one of the most serious affairs of his career. For everything pointed to the fact that the girl with whom he had fallen so desperately in love was involved in the ugliest of tragedies. Apparently she was the confederate of murderers and crooks. But he could not give her up and set himself to solve the mystery of her identity. How he succeeded makes an unforgettable story of love and fighting all mixed up together and all the best of good reading.



THE CACTUS KID, a Western Story by James Roberts, Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Price 75c.

You know the name of James Roberts.

It's like the mark "Sterling" on silver to find it on the jacket of a ripping Western story. Well, he has gone and done it again, turned out another galloping masterpiece against the background of his beloved West. Here he tells of a new way to collect a debt, the way the Cactus Kid did it, at the end of a practical Colt. And he tells us what happened then and how the Kid got into one scrape after another, all the time preserving the happy-go-lucky air about him that is best described in the song he sings about himself:

"Oh, I'm the Cactus Kid from Texas,
Tougher than weather and swifter than lead;

I fork 'em and ride 'em whenever I find 'em,

Till they're ready to quit or they're already dead."

We urge you to meet up with the Kid because we know you'll like him fine. You can get an introduction from your dealer right around the corner.



THE books mentioned above are all seventy-five-centers, well bound and printed, called by those who ought to know, "the outstanding bargain in the book world to-day." But don't forget that Chelsea House turns out regular two-dollar novels as well—novels that belong in your library for keeps. Here is one of the latest:

ON THE RIGHT WRISTS, by Armstrong Livingston, Published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue. Price \$2.

The storm begins to brew at a quarrel in a camp owned by the wealthy and unscrupulous "Spider of Wall Street." It gathers in rage to a thrilling climax when at last the handcuffs are on the right wrists—those of the man who killed the Spider, and then at length the sky clears. Armstrong Livingston has here written a detective story that in all its 300 and more pages never once lags or fails to thrill. Unless we are very much unlike the average fiction lover the country over, this book will be discussed for months to come and the tired reviewers will have something very real and interesting to enthuse over.

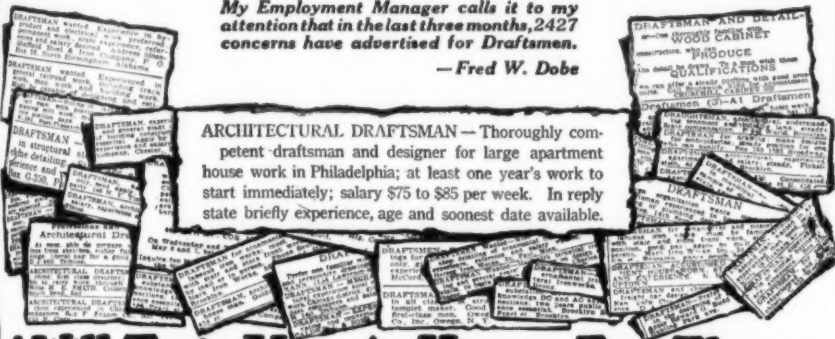
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Draftsmen Wanted!

My Employment Manager calls it to my attention that in the last three months, 2427 concerns have advertised for Draftsmen.

— Fred W. Dobe

ARCHITECTURAL DRAFTSMAN — Thoroughly competent draftsman and designer for large apartment house work in Philadelphia; at least one year's work to start immediately; salary \$75 to \$85 per week. In reply state briefly experience, age and soonest date available.



I Will Train You At Home For These Positions Paying Up To \$4420 a Year

Where are all the men to come from to fill these jobs? Only trained men are wanted. There's no demand for men who want to learn "on the job." If you want to get into this highly paid trade, you have got to learn it before you enter.

Have YOU the time to lay off work and go to day school? You can learn drafting at home in your spare time. I have trained hundreds of men who were in the same position you are in—men who are making good at high salaries. I know what other Chief Draftsmen demand in the way of experience and skill. I have spent years developing a practical course of training that teaches these things in the shortest possible time. The slight cost of my course is within easy reach of everyone. In fact, I have a plan that enables you to earn the entire cost of your course, without interfering with your studies or your job.

Why should you? Not at all necessary.

No Extra Charge for Drafting Outfit

As soon as you decide to take my training, I send you a complete Drafting Outfit, just like the one I use myself. It comes as part of your course. No extra charge. Everything is just what you need, both for your course, and your BIG JOB later: The "Chief's Own" Drafting Table, fine set of drafting instruments, 24-inch T square, triangles, French Curve, drafting board, rule, pencils, ink, paper, thumb tacks. These are all necessary in my course, because I teach practical work. That's the way to learn drafting.

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A Book Lovers' Tournament

How fully does the style betray the writer? Could you detect the essence of Shakespeare in an obscure passage of his work? Could you read "Dickens" between the lines of a Pickwickian dialogue? Would the felicitous flow of an anonymous extract from a Stevenson romance reveal its author to you? In

AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE for December

you will find a complete story whose title is withheld and whose author is left anonymous. Nothing in the story has been altered; nothing has been left out except the title. The name of the author is known wherever books are circulated.

Can you identify the author and the story?

It will be worth your while to try.

For complete details of the Book Lovers' Tournament, and also for the best fiction of the month, see

December AINSLEE'S Magazine

Stories by

James Branch Cabell

Leonard Merrick

Rafael Sabatini

A Serial by

May Sinclair

A Book-length Novel by

Elizabeth Robins

ON ALL NEWS STANDS NOVEMBER 15th

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FREE when you enroll
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FREE Simply send name today for circular and full details how it works and amazing offer.

EVERBRITE STOVE CO. 380 Gateway Station Kansas City, Mo.

\$26.75 A Week or More

Hatfield (Dayton, O.) writes: "It is a good week when he doesn't make more than that. He is just one of the many successful M. S. A. S. graduates. We can train you too for a better job or a business of your own."

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MICHIGAN STATE AUTOMOBILE SCHOOL
2231 Auto Building Detroit, Mich.



Are you afraid you will be fired?

ARE you sitting on the anxious bench wondering what will happen to you if business slacks up? Are you one of the many small-salaried, untrained workers who are always the first to go when employers start cutting the salary list?

Why have this spectre of unemployment hanging over you all the time? Why not decide today that you are going to make yourself so valuable to your employer that he can't get along without you?

You can do it if you really want to, right at home in spare time, through the International Correspondence Schools. In just an hour a day you can get the special training that you must have if you are ever going to get—and keep—a real job at a real salary.

You're ambitious, aren't you? And you want to get ahead? Then don't turn this page until you have clipped the coupon, marked the line of work you want to follow and mailed it to Scranton for full particulars.

Surely it is worth at least a two-cent stamp to find out all about the I. C. S. and what it can do for you.



Mail the Coupon for Free Booklet

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Box 2093, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject before which I have marked an X:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Accountancy (including C.P.A.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Service |
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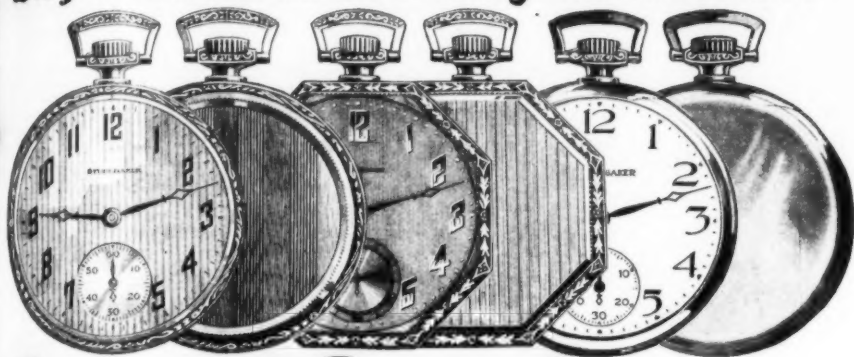
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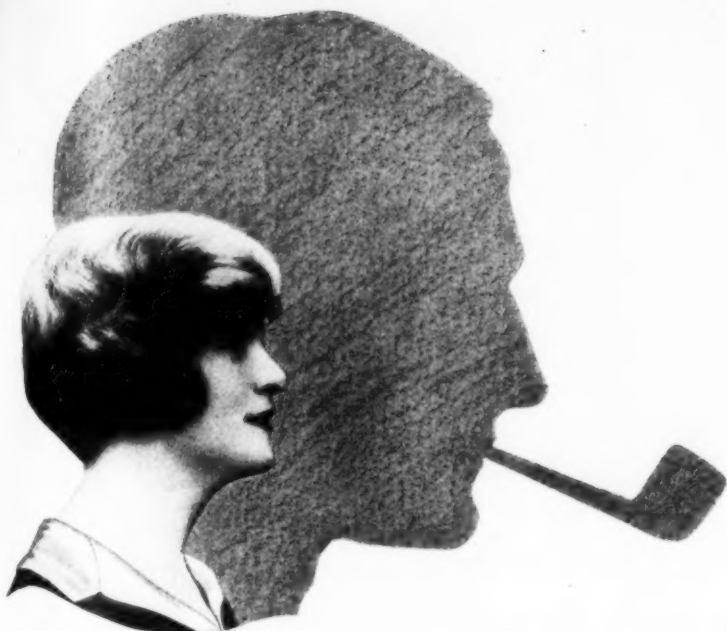
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The question women ask every day is, "Can I do dishes, wash clothes and clean house, and still have hands that do not confess it?"

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AINSLEE'S

VOL. LVL

NOVEMBER, 1925.

No. 2.

A Complete Novel by E. Phillips Oppenheim

Author of

The Illustrious Prince



Berenice

CHAPTER I.

YOU may not care for the play," Ellison said eagerly. "You are of the old world, and the modern drama to you will simply spell chaos and vulgarity. But the woman! Well, you will see her! I don't want to prejudice you by praises which you would certainly think extravagant. I will say nothing."

Matravers smiled gravely as he took his seat in the box and looked out with some wonder at the ill-lit, half-empty theater.

"I am afraid," he said, "that I am very much out of place here, yet do not imagine that I bring with me any personal bias whatever. To-night I have no individuality. I am a critic."

"I am sorry," Ellison remarked, glancing out into the gloomy well of the

theater with an impatient frown, "that there is so bad a house to-night. It is depressing to play seriously to a handful of people."

"It will not affect my judgment," Matravers said.

"It will affect her acting, though," Ellison replied gloomily. "There are times when, even to us who know her strength, and are partial to her, she appears to act with difficulty—to be encumbered with all the diffidence of the amateur. For a whole scene she will be little better than a stick. The change, when it comes, is like a sudden fire from heaven! Something flashes into her face; she becomes inspired, she holds us breathless, hanging upon every word; it is then one realizes that she is a genius."

"Let us hope," Matravers said, "that

some such moment may visit her to-night. One needs some compensation for a dinnerless evening, and such surroundings as these!"

He turned from the contemplation of the dreary, half-empty auditorium with a faint shudder. It was a relief when the feeble overture came to an end, and the curtain was rung up. He settled himself down at once to a careful appreciation of the performance.

The first act was almost over before the heroine of the play, and the actress concerning whose merits there was already some difference of opinion, appeared. A little burst of applause, half-hearted from the house generally, enthusiastic from a few, greeted her entrance.

Ellison, watching his companion's face closely, was gratified to find a distinct change there. In Matravers' altered expression was something more than the transitory sensation of pleasure, called up by the unexpected appearance of a very beautiful woman. The whole impassiveness of that calm, almost marble-still face, with its set, cold lips, and slightly wearied eyes, had suddenly disappeared, and what Ellison had hoped for had arrived. Matravers was, without doubt, interested.

Yet the woman, whose appearance had caused a certain thrill to quiver through the house, and whose coming had certainly been an event to Matravers, did absolutely nothing for the remainder of that dreary first act to redeem the forlorn play, or to justify her own peculiar reputation. She acted languidly, her enunciation was imperfect, her gestures were forced and inapt. When the curtain went down upon the first act, Matravers was looking grave. Ellison was obviously uneasy.

"Berenice," he muttered, "is not herself to-night. She will improve. You must suspend your judgment."

Matravers fingered his program nervously.

"You are interested in this production, Ellison," he said, "and I should be sorry to write anything likely to do it harm. I think it would be better if I went away now. I cannot be blamed

if I decline to give an opinion on anything which I have only partially seen."

Ellison shook his head.

"No, I'll chance it," he said. "Don't go. You haven't seen Berenice at her best yet. You have not seen her at all, in fact."

The curtain rang up again, the play proceeded. But not the same play—at least, so it seemed to Matravers—not the same play; surely not the same woman! A situation improbable enough, but dramatic, had occurred at the very beginning of the second act. She had risen to the opportunity, triumphed over it, electrified her audience, delighted Ellison, moved Matravers to silent wonder. Her personality seemed to have dilated with the flash of genius which Matravers himself had been among the first to recognize. The strange pallor of her face seemed no longer the legacy of ill health; her eyes, wonderfully soft and dark, were lit now with all manner of strange fires. She carried herself with supreme grace; there was not the faintest suspicion of staginess in any one of her movements.

And more wonderful than anything to Matravers, himself a delighted worshiper of the beautiful in all human sounds, was that marvelously sweet voice, so low and yet so clear, expressing with perfect art the highest and most hallowed emotions, with the least amount of actual sound. She seemed to pour out the vials of her wrath, her outraged womanhood, in tones raised little above a whisper, and the man who fronted her seemed turned into the actual semblance of an ashamed and unclean thing.

Matravers made no secret now of his interest. He had drawn his chair to the front of the box, and the footlights fell full upon his pale, studious face turned with grave and absolute attention upon the little drama working itself out upon the stage.

Ellison, in the midst of his jubilation, found time to notice what to him seemed a somewhat singular incident. In crossing the stage her eyes had for a moment met Matravers' earnest gaze, and Ellison could almost have declared

that a faint, welcoming light flashed for a moment from the woman to the man. Yet he was sure that the two were strangers. They had never met—her very name had been unknown to him. It must have been his fancy.

The curtain fell upon the second and final act amid as much applause as the sparsely filled theater could offer; but mingled with it, almost as the last words of her final speech had left her lips, came a curious, hoarse cry from somewhere in the cheaper seats near the back of the house. It was heard very distinctly in every part; it rang out upon the deep, quivering stillness which reigns for a second between the end of a play which has left the audience spellbound and the burst of applause which is its first reawakening instinct. It was drowned in less than a moment, yet many people turned their startled heads toward the rows of back seats.

Matravers, one of the first to hear it, was one of the most interested—perhaps because his sensitive ears had recognized in it that peculiar inflection, the true ring of earnestness. For it was essentially a human cry, a cry of sorrow, a strange note charged in its very hoarseness and spontaneity with an unutterable pathos. It was as though it had been actually drawn from the heart to the lips, and long after the house had become deserted, Matravers stood there, his hands resting upon the edge of the box, and his dark face turned steadfastly to that far-away corner, where it seemed to him that he could see a solitary, human figure, sitting with bowed head among the wilderness of empty seats.

Ellison touched him at last upon the elbow.

"You must come with me and be presented to Berenice," he said.

Matravers shook his head.

"Please excuse me," he said. "I would really rather not."

Ellison held out a crumpled half sheet of note paper.

"This has just been brought in to me," he said.

Matravers read the single line, hastily written, and in pencil:

Bring your friend to me.—B.

"It will scarcely take us a moment," Ellison continued. "Don't stop to put on your coat; we are the last in the theater now."

Matravers, whose will was usually a very dominant one, found himself calmly obeying his companion. Following Ellison, he was hustled down a long, narrow passage, across a bare wilderness of boards and odd pieces of scenery, to the door of a room immediately behind the stage. As Ellison raised his fingers to knock, it was opened from the inside, and Berenice came out, wrapped from head to foot in a black-satin coat, and with a piece of white lace twisted around her hair. She stopped when she saw the two men, and held out her hand to Ellison, who immediately introduced Matravers.

Again Ellison fancied that in her greeting of him there were some traces of a former knowledge. But nothing in her words or in his alluded to it.

"I am very much honored," Matravers said simply. "I am a rare attendant at the theater, and your performance gave me great pleasure."

"I am very glad," she answered. "Do you know that you made me wretchedly nervous? I was told just as I was going on that you had come to smash us all to atoms in that terrible *Day*."

"I came as a critic," he answered, "but I am a very incompetent one. Perhaps you will appreciate my ignorance more when I tell you that this is my first visit behind the scenes of a theater."

She laughed softly, and they looked around together at the dimly burning gaslights, the creaking scenery being drawn back from the stage, the woman with a brush and mop sweeping, and at that dismal perspective of holland-shrouded auditorium beyond, now quite deserted.

"At least," she said, "your impressions cannot be mixed ones. It is hideous here."

He did not contradict her; and they both ignored Ellison's murmured compliment.

"It is very drafty," he remarked, "and you seem cold. We must not keep you here. May we—can I," he added, glancing down the stone passage, "show you to your carriage?"

She laughed softly.

"You may come with me," she said, "but our exit is like a rabbit burrow; we must go in single file, and almost on hands and knees."

She led the way, and they followed her into the street. A small brougham was waiting at the door, and her maid was standing by it. The commissionaire stood away, and Matravers closed the carriage door upon them. Her white, ungloved hand, loaded—overloaded it seemed to him—with rings, stole through the window, and he held it for a moment in his. He felt somehow that he was expected to say something. She was looking at him very intently. There was some powder on her cheeks, which he noted with an instinctive thrill of aversion.

"Shall I tell him home?" he asked.

"If you please," she answered.

"Madame!" her maid interposed.

"Home, please," Berenice said calmly. "Good-by, Mr. Matravers."

"Good night."

The carriage rolled away. At the corner of the street Berenice pulled the check string.

"The Milan Restaurant," she told the man briefly.

Matravers and Ellison lit their cigarettes and strolled away on foot. At the corner of the street Ellison had an inspiration.

"Let us," he said, "have some supper somewhere."

Matravers shook his head.

"I really have a great deal of work to do," he said, "and I must write this notice for the *Day*. I think that I will go straight home."

Ellison thrust his arm through his companion's, and called a hansom.

"It will only take us half an hour," he declared, "and we will go to one of

the fashionable places. You will be amused! Come! It all enters, you know, into your revised scheme of life—the attainment of a fuller and more catholic knowledge of your fellow creatures. We will see our fellow creatures *en fête*."

Matravers suffered himself to be persuaded. They drove to a restaurant close at hand, and stood for a moment at the entrance looking for seats. The room was crowded.

"I will go," Ellison said, "and find the director. He knows me well, and he will find me a table."

He elbowed his way up to the farther end of the apartment. Matravers remained a somewhat conspicuous figure in the doorway looking from one to another of the little parties with a smile, half amused, half interested. Suddenly his face became grave, his heart gave an unaccustomed leap. He stood quite still, his eyes fixed upon the bent head and white shoulders of a woman only a few yards away from him.

Almost at the same moment Berenice looked up and their eyes met. The color left her cheeks; she was ghastly pale. A sentence which she had just begun died away upon her lips; her companion, who was intent upon the wine list, noticed nothing. She made a movement as though to rise. Simultaneously Matravers turned upon his heel and left the room.

Ellison came hurrying back in a few moments and looked in vain for his companion. As he stood there watching the throng of people, Berenice called him to her.

"Your friend," she said, "has gone away. He stood for a moment in the doorway like *Banquo's* ghost, and then he disappeared."

Ellison looked vaguely bewildered.

"Matravers is an odd sort," he remarked. "I suppose it is one of the penalties of genius to be compelled to do eccentric things. I must have my supper alone."

"Or with us," she said. "You know Mr. Thorndyke, don't you? There is plenty of room here."

CHAPTER II.

Matravers stood at an open window, reading a note by the gray dawn light. Below him stretched the broad thoroughfare of Piccadilly, noiseless, shadowy, deserted. He had thrown up the window, overcome by a sudden sense of suffocation, and a chill, damp breeze came stealing in, cooling his parched forehead and hot, dry eyes. For the last two or three hours he had been working with an unwonted and rare zest; it had happened quite by chance, for as a rule he was a man of regular, even mechanical habits. But to-night he scarcely knew himself—he had all the sensations of a man who had passed through a new and altogether unexpected experience.

At midnight he had let himself into his room after that swift, impulsive departure from the Milan, and had dropped by chance into the chair before his writing table. The sight of his last unfinished sentence, abruptly abandoned in the center of a neatly written page of manuscript, had fascinated him, and as he sat there idly with the loose sheet in his hands, holding it so that the lamplight might fall upon its very legible characters, an idea flashed into his brain—an idea which had persistently eluded him for days. With the sudden stimulus of a purely mental activity, he had hastily thrown aside his outdoor garment, and had written for several hours with a readiness and facility which seemed somehow for the last few days to have been denied him.

He had become his old self again; the events of the evening lay already far behind. Then had come a soft knocking at the door, followed by the apologetic entrance of his servant bearing a note upon which his name was written in hasty characters with an "Immediate" scrawled, as though by an afterthought, upon the left-hand corner. He had torn it open, wondering at the woman's writing, and glanced at its brief contents carelessly enough, but since then he had done no work. For the present he was not likely to do any more.

The cold breeze, acting like a tonic upon his dazed senses, awoke in him also a peculiar restlessness, a feeling of intolerable restraint at the close environment of his little room and its associations. Its atmosphere had suddenly become stifling. He caught up his cloak and hat, and walked out again into the silent street. It seemed to him, momentarily forgetful of the hour, like a city of the dead into which he had wandered.

As he turned, from habit, toward the park, the great houses on his right frowned down upon him lightless and lifeless. The broad pavement, pressed a few hours ago, and so soon to be pressed again by the steps of an innumerable multitude, was deserted; his own footfall seemed to awaken a strange and curiously persistent echo, as though some one were indeed following him on the opposite side of the way under the shadow of the drooping lime trees.

Once he stopped and listened. The footsteps ceased, too. There was no one. With a faint smile at the illusion to which he had for a moment yielded, he continued his walk.

Before him the outline of the arch stood out with gloomy distinctness against a cold, lowering background of vaporous sky. Like a man who was still half dreaming, he crossed the road and entered the park, making his way toward the trees. There was a spot about halfway down, where, in the afternoons, he usually sat. Near it he found two chairs, one on top of the other; he removed the upper one and sat down, crossing his legs and lighting a cigarette which he took from his case. Then in a transitory return of his ordinary state of mind he laughed softly to himself. People would say that he was going mad.

Through half-closed eyes he looked out upon the broad drive. With the aid of an imagination naturally powerful, he was passing with marvelous facility into an unreal world of his own creation. The scene remained the same, but the environment changed as though by magic. Sunshine pierced the gray

veil of clouds; gay voices and laughter broke the chill silence.

The horn of a four-in-hand sounded from the corner; the path before him was thronged with men and women whose rustling skirts brushed often against his knees as they made their way with difficulty along the promenade. A glittering show of carriages and coaches swept past the railings; the air was full of the sound of the trampling of horses and the rolling of wheels. With a mental restraint of which he was all the time half-conscious, he kept back the final effort of his imagination for some time; but it came at last.

A victoria, drawn by a single dark-bay horse, with servants in quiet liveries, drew up at the paling, and a woman leaning back among the cushions looked out at him across the sea of faces as she had indeed looked more than once. She was surrounded by handsomer women in more elaborate toilets and more splendid equipages. Her cheeks were pale, and she was undoubtedly thin. Nevertheless, to other people as well as to him, she was a personality. Even then he seemed to feel the little stir which always passed like electricity into the air directly her carriage was stayed.

When she had come, when he was perfectly sure of her, and indeed under the spell of her near presence, he drew that note again from his pocket and read it.

18 Large Street, W.

12:30.

I told you a lie! And I feel that you will never forgive me. Yet I want to explain it. There is something I want you to know! Will you come and see me? I shall be at home until one o'clock to-morrow morning, or, if the afternoon suits you better, from four to six.

BERENICE.

A lie! Yes, it was that. To him, an inveterate lover of truth, the offense had seemed wholly unpardonable. He had set himself to forget the woman and the incident as something altogether beneath his recollection. The night, with its host of strange, half-awakened sensations, was a memory to be lived down, to be crushed altogether. For

him, doubtless, that lie had been a providence. It put a stop to any further intercourse between them. It stamped her at once with the hall-mark of unworthiness.

Yet he knew that he was disappointed; disappointment was, perhaps, a mild word. He had walked through the streets with Ellison, after that meeting with her at the theater, conscious of an unwonted buoyancy of spirits, feeling that he had drawn into his life a new experience which promised to be a very pleasant one.

There were things about the woman which had not pleased him, but they were, on the whole, merely superficial incidents—accidents, he chose to think, of her environment. He had even permitted himself to look forward to their next meeting, to a definite continuance of their acquaintance. Standing in the doorway of the brilliantly lit Milan, he had looked in at the vivid little scene with a certain eager tolerance. There was much, after all, that was attractive in this side of life, so much that was worth cultivating; he blamed himself that he had stood aloof from it for so long.

Then their eyes had met, he had seen her sudden start, had felt his heart sink like lead. She was a creature of common clay, after all. His eyes rested for a moment upon her companion, a man well known to him, though of a class for whom his contempt was great, and with whom he had no kinship. She was like this, then. It was a pity.

His cigarette went out, and a rain-drop, which had been hovering upon a leaf above him, fell with a splash upon the sheet of heavy white paper. He rose to his feet, stiff and chilled and disillusioned. His little ghost world of fancies had faded away. Morning had come, and eastward a single shaft of cold sunlight had pierced the gray sky.

CHAPTER III.

At ten o'clock he breakfasted, after three hours' sleep and a cold bath. In the bright yet soft spring daylight, the lines of his face had relaxed, and

the pallor of his cheeks was less unnatural. He was still a man of remarkable appearance; his features were strong and firmly chiseled, his forehead was square and almost hard. He wore no beard, but a slight, black mustache only half concealed a delicate and sensitive mouth. His complexion and his soft gray eyes were alike possessed of a singular clearness, as though they were, indeed, the indices of a temperate and well-contained life. His dress, and every movement and detail of his person, were characterized by an extreme deliberation; his whole appearance bespoke a peculiar and almost feminine fastidiousness.

The few appointments of his simple meal were the most perfect of their kind. A delicate vase of freshly cut flowers stood on the center of the spotless tablecloth; the hangings and coloring of the apartment were softly harmonious. The walls were hung with fine engravings, with here and there a brilliant little water color of the school of Corot; a few marble and bronze statuettes were scattered about on the mantelpiece and on brackets. There was nothing particularly striking anywhere, yet there was nothing on which the eye could not rest with pleasure.

At half past ten he lit a cigarette, and sat down at his desk. He wrote quite steadily for an hour; at the end of that time he pinned together the result of his work, and wrote a hasty note.

113 Piccadilly.

DEAR MR. HASLUP: I went last night to the New Theater, and I send you my views as to what I saw there. But I beg that you will remember my absolute ignorance on all matters pertaining to the modern drama, and use your own discretion entirely as to the disposal of the inclosed. I do not feel myself, in any sense of the word, a competent critic, and I trust that you will not feel yourself under the least obligation to give to my views the weight of your journal.

I remain, yours truly,

JOHN MATRAVERS.

His finger was upon the bell, when his servant entered, bearing a note upon a salver. Matravers glanced at the handwriting already becoming familiar to him, recognizing, too, the faint odor

of violets which seemed to escape into the room as his fingers broke the seal.

It is half past eleven, and you have not come! Does that mean that you will not listen to me, that you mean to judge me unheard? You will not be so unkind! I shall remain indoors until one o'clock, and I shall expect you.

BERENICE.

Matravers laid the note down, and covered it with a paper weight. Then he sealed his own letter, and gave it, with the manuscript, to his servant. The man withdrew, and Matravers continued his writing.

He worked steadily until two o'clock. Then a simple luncheon was brought in to him, and upon the tray another note. Matravers took it with some hesitation, and read it thoughtfully.

Two o'clock.

You have made up your mind then, not to come. Very well, I, too, am determined. If you will not come to me, I shall come to you! I shall remain in until four o'clock. You may expect to see me any time after then.

BERENICE.

Matravers ate his luncheon and pondered, finally deciding to abandon a struggle in which his was obviously the weaker position. He lingered for a while over his coffee; at three o'clock he retired for a few moments into his dressing room, and then, descending the stairs, made his way out into the street.

He had told himself only a few hours back that he would be wise to ignore this summons from a woman, the ways of whose life must lie very far indeed from his. Yet he knew that his meeting with her had affected him as nothing of the sort had ever affected him before—a man unimpressible where women were concerned and ever devoted to, and cultivating a somewhat unnatural exclusiveness. Her first note he had been content to ignore—she might have written it in a fit of pique—but the second had made him thoughtful. Her very persistence was characteristic.

Perhaps after all she was in the right—he had arrived too hastily at an ignoble conclusion. Her attitude toward him was curiously unconventional; it was an attitude such as none of the few women with whom he had ever been

brought into contact would have dreamed of assuming. But none the less it had for him a fascination which he could not measure or define—it had awakened a new sensation, which, as a philosopher, he was anxious to probe.

The mysticism of his early morning wanderings seemed to him, as he walked leisurely through the sunlit streets, in a sense ridiculous. After all, it was a little thing that he was going to do; he was going to make, against his will, an afternoon call. To other men it would have seemed less than nothing, albeit he knew he was about to draw into his life a new experience.

He rang the bell at No. 18 Large Street, and gave his card to the trim little maidservant who opened the door. In a minute or two she returned, and invited him to follow her upstairs; her mistress was in, and would see him at once.

She led the way up the broad staircase into a room which could perhaps be most aptly described as a feminine den. The walls, above the low bookshelves which bordered the whole apartment, were hung with a medley of water colors and photographs—water colors which a single glance showed him were good, and of the school then most in vogue. The carpet was soft and thick; divans and easy chairs filled with cushions were plentiful. By the side of one of these, which bore signs of recent occupation, was a reading stand, and upon it a Shakespeare and a volume of his own critical essays.

To him, with all his senses quickened by an intense curiosity, there seemed to hang about the atmosphere of the room that subtle odor of femininity which, in the case of a man, would probably have been represented by tobacco smoke.

A Sèvres jar of Neapolitan violets stood upon the table near the divan. Henceforth the perfume of violets seemed a thing apart from the perfume of all other flowers to the man who stood there waiting, himself with a few of the light purple blossoms in the buttonhole of his frock coat.

CHAPTER IV.

She came to him so noiselessly, that for a moment or two he was unaware of her entrance. There was neither the rustle of skirts nor the sound of any movement to apprise him of it, yet he became suddenly conscious that he was not alone. He turned around at once and saw her standing within a few feet of him. She held out her hand frankly.

"So you have come!" she said. "I thought you would. But then you had very little choice, had you?" she added with a little laugh.

She passed him, and deliberately seated herself among a pile of cushions on the divan nearest her reading stand. For the moment he neglected her gestured invitation, and remained standing, looking at her.

"I was very glad to come," he said simply.

She shook her head.

"You were afraid of my threat. You were afraid that I might come to you. Well, it is probable—almost certain that I should have come. You have saved yourself from that, at any rate."

Although the situation was a novel one to him, he was not in the least embarrassed. He was altogether too sincere to be possessed of any self-consciousness. He found himself at last actually in the presence of the woman who, since first he had seen her, months ago, driving in the park, had been constantly in his thoughts, and he began to wonder with perfect clearness of judgment wherein lay her peculiar fascination.

That she was handsome, of her type, went for nothing. The world was full of more beautiful women whom he saw day by day without the faintest thrill of interest. Besides, her face was too pale and her form too thin for exceptional beauty. There must be something else—something about her personality which refused to lend itself to any absolute analysis.

She was perfectly dressed—he realized that, because he was never afterward able to recall exactly what she

wore. Her eyes were soft and dark and luminous—soft with a light the power of which he was not slow to recognize.

But none of these things was of any important account in reckoning with the woman. He became convinced, in those few moments of deliberate observation, that there was nothing in her person which could justify her reputation. On the whole he was glad of it. Any other form of attraction was more welcome to him than a purely physical one.

"First of all," she began, leaning forward and looking at him over her interlaced fingers, "I want you to tell me this. You will answer me faithfully, I know. What did you think of my writing to you, of my persistence? Tell me exactly what you thought."

"I was surprised," he answered. "How could I help it? I was surprised, too," he added, "to find that I wanted very much to come."

"The women whom you know," she said quietly—"I suppose you do know some—would not have done such a thing. Some people say that I am mad. One may as well try to live up to one's reputation; I have taken a little of the license of madness."

"It was unusual, perhaps," he admitted; "but who is not weary of usual things? I gathered from your note that you had something to explain. I was anxious to hear what that explanation could be."

She was silent for a moment, her eyes fixed upon vacancy, a faint smile at the corners of her lips.

"First," she said, "let me tell you this: I want to have you understand why I was anxious that you should not think worse of me than I deserved. I am rather a spoiled woman. I have grown used to having my own way; I wanted to know you; I have wanted to for some time. We have passed one another day after day; I knew quite well all the time who you were, and it seemed so stupid! Do you know once or twice I have had an insane desire to come right up to your chair and break in upon your meditations—hold out my hand and make you talk to

me? That would have been worse than this, would it not? But I firmly believe that I should have done it some day. So you see I wrote my little note in self-defense."

"I do not know that I should have been so completely surprised, after all," he said. "I, too, have felt something of what you have expressed. I have been interested in your comings and your goings. But then you knew that, or you would never have written to me."

"One sacrifices so much," she murmured, "on the altars of the modern goddess. We live in such a tiny compass; nothing ever happens. It is only psychologically that one's emotions can be reached at all. Events are quite out of date. I am speaking from a woman's point of view."

"You should have lived," he said, smiling, "in the days of Joan of Arc."

"No doubt," she answered, "I should have found that equally dull. What I was endeavoring to do was, first of all, to plead some justification for wanting to know you. For a woman there is nothing left but the study of personalities."

"Mine," he answered, with a faint gleam in his eyes, "is very much at your service."

"I am going to take you at your word," she warned him.

"You will be very much disappointed. I am perfectly willing to be dissected, but the result will be inadequate."

She leaned back among the cushions and looked at him thoughtfully.

"Listen," she said; "I can tell you something of your history, as you will see. I want you to fill in the blanks."

"Mine," he murmured, "will be the greater task. My life is a record of blank places. The history is to come."

"This," she said, "is the extent of my knowledge. You were the second son of Sir Lionel Matravers, and you have been an orphan since you were very young. You were meant to take holy orders, but when the time came you declined. At Oxford you did very well indeed. You established a brilliant reputation as a classical scholar, and you became a fellow of St. John's.

"It was while you were there that you wrote 'Studies in Character.' Two years ago, I do not know why, you gave up your fellowship and came to London. You took up the editorship of a review—the *Bi-Weekly*, I think—but you resigned it on a matter of principle. You have a somewhat curious reputation. The *Scrutineer* invariably alludes to you as the apostle of æstheticism. You are reported to have fixed views as to the conduct of life, down even to its most trifling details. That sounds unpleasant, but it probably isn't altogether true. Don't interrupt, please! You have no intimate friends, but you go sometimes into society. You are apparently a mixture of poet, philosopher, and man of fashion. I have heard you spoken of more than once as a disciple of Epicurus. You also, in the course of your literary work, review novels—unfortunately for me—and six months ago you were the cause of my nearly crying my eyes out. It was perhaps silly of me to attempt, without any literary experience, to write a modern story, but my own life supplied the motive, and at least I was faithful to what I felt and knew. No one else has ever said such cruel things about my work. "Womanlike, you see, I repay my injuries by becoming interested in you. If you had praised my book, I dare say I should never have thought of you at all. Then there is one thing more. Every day you sit in the park close to where I stop, and—you look at me. It seems as though we had often spoken there. Shall I tell you what I have been vain enough to think sometimes?"

"I have watched you from a distance, often before you have seen me. You always sit in the same attitude. Your eyebrows are a little contracted, there is generally the ghost of a smile upon your lips. You are like an outsider who has come to look upon a brilliant show. I could fancy that you have clothed yourself in the personality of the young Roman noble whose name you have made so famous, and from another age were gazing tolerantly and even kindly upon the folly and the pageantry which have survived for two

thousand years. And then I have taken my little place in the procession, and I have fancied that a subtle change has stolen into your face. You have looked at me as gravely as ever, but no longer as an impersonal spectator.

"It is as though I have seemed a live person to you, and the others, mummies. Once the change came so swiftly that I smiled at you—I could not help it—and you looked away."

"I remember it distinctly," he interrupted. "I thought the smile was for some one behind me."

She shook her head.

"It was for you. Now I have finished. Fill in the blanks, please."

He was content to answer her in the same strain. The effect of her complete naturalness was already upon him.

"So far as my personal history is concerned," he told her, "you are wonderfully correct. There is nothing more to be said about it. I gave up my fellowship at Oxford because I have always been convinced of the increasing narrowness and limitations of purely academic culture and scholarship. I was afraid of what I should become as an old man, of what I was already growing into. I wanted to have a closer grip upon human things, to be in more sympathetic relations with the great world of my fellow men. Can you understand me, I wonder? The influences of a university town are too purely scholarly to produce literary work of wide human interest. London had always fascinated me—though as yet I have met with many disappointments. As to the *Bi-Weekly*, it was my first idea to undertake no fixed literary work, and it was only after great pressure that I took it for a time. As you know, my editorship was a failure."

He paused for a moment or two, and looked steadily at her. He was anxious to watch the effect of what he was going to say.

"You have mentioned my review of your novel in the *Bi-Weekly*. I cannot say that I am sorry I wrote it. I never attacked a book with so much pleasure. But I am very sorry indeed that you should have written it. With your

gifts you could have given to the world something better than a mere psychological debauch."

She laughed softly, but genuinely. "I adore sincerity," she exclaimed, "and it is so many years since I was actually scolded. A 'psychological debauch' is delightful. But I cannot help my views, can I? My experiences were made for me! I became the creature of circumstances. No one is morally responsible for his opinions."

"There are things," he said, "which find their way into our thoughts and conclusions, but of which it would be considered flagrantly bad taste to speak. And there are things in the world which exist, which have existed from time immemorial, the evil legacy of countless generations, of which it seems to me to be equally bad taste to write. Art has a limitless choice of subjects. I would not have you sully your fine gifts by writing of anything save of the beautiful."

"This is rank hedonism," she laughed. "It is a survival of your academic days."

"Some day," he answered, "we will talk more fully of this. It is a little early for us to discuss a subject upon which we hold such opposite views."

"You are afraid that we might quarrel?"

"No, not that! Only as I am something of an idealist, and you, I suppose, have placed yourself among the ranks of the realists, we should scarcely meet upon a common basis. But—will you forgive me if I say so?—I am very sure that some day you will be a deserter."

"And why?"

"I do not know anything of your history," he continued gently, "nor am I asking for your confidence. Only in your story there was a personal note, which seemed to me to somehow explain the bitterness and directness with which you wrote—of certain subjects. I think that you yourself have had trouble—or perhaps a dear friend has suffered, and her grief has become yours. There was a little poison in your pen, I think. Never mind! We shall be friends, and I shall watch it pass away!"

"Friends," she repeated with a certain wistfulness in her tone. "But have you forgotten—what you came for?"

"I do not think," he said slowly, "that it is of much consequence."

"But it is," she insisted. "You asked me distinctly where I wished to be driven to from the theater, and I told you—home! All the time I knew that I was going to have supper with Mr. Thorndyke at the Milan. Morally I lied to you!"

"Why?" he asked.

"I cannot tell you," she answered; "it was an impulse. I thought nothing of accepting the man's invitation. You know him, I dare say. He is a millionaire, and it is his money which supports the theater. He has asked me several times, and, although personally I dislike him, he has, of course, a certain claim upon my acquaintance. I have made excuses once or twice. Last night was the first time I have ever been out anywhere with him. I do not, of course, pretend to be in the least conventional—I have always permitted myself the utmost liberty of action. Yet—I had wanted so much to know you—I was afraid of prejudicing you. After all, you see, I have no explanation. It was just an impulse. I have hated myself for it; but it is done!"

"It was," he said, "a trifle of no importance. We will forget it."

A gleam of gratitude shone in her dark eyes. Her head drooped a little. He fancied that her voice was not quite so steady.

"It is good," she said, "to hear you say that."

He looked around the room, and back into her face. Some dim foreknowledge of what was to come between them seemed to flash before his eyes. It was like a sudden glimpse into that unseen world so close at hand, in which he—that Roman noble—had at any rate implicitly believed. There was a faint smile upon his face as his eyes met hers.

"At least," he said, "I shall be able to come and talk with you now at the railing, instead of watching you from my chair. For you were quite right in what you said just now. I have

watched for you every day—for many days."

"You will be able to come," she said gravely, "if you care to. You mix so little with the men who love to talk scandal of a woman, that you may never have heard them—talk of me. But they do, I know! I hear all about it—it used to amuse me. You have the reputation of ultraexclusiveness. If you and I are known to be friends, you may have to risk losing it."

His brows were slightly contracted, and he had half closed his eyes—a habit of his when anything was said which offended his taste.

"I wonder whether you would mind not talking like that," he said.

"Why not? I would not have you hear these things from other people. It is best to be truthful, is it not? To run no risk of any misunderstandings?"

"There is no fear of anything of that sort," he said calmly. "I do not pretend to be a magician or a diviner, yet I think I know you for what you are, and it is sufficient. Some day—"

He broke off in the middle of a sentence. The door had opened. A man stood upon the threshold. The servant announced him—Mr. Thorndyke.

Matravers rose at once to his feet. He had a habit—the outcome, doubtless, of his epicurean tenets—of leaving at once, and at any costs, society not wholly agreeable to him. He bowed coldly to the man who was already greeting Berenice, and who was carrying a great bunch of Parma violets.

Mr. Thorndyke was evidently astonished at his presence—and not agreeably.

"Have you come, Mr. Matravers," he asked coldly, "to make your peace?"

"I am not aware," Matravers answered calmly, "of any reason why I should do so."

Mr. Thorndyke raised his eyebrows, and drew an afternoon paper from his pocket.

"This is your writing, is it not?" he asked.

Matravers glanced at the paragraph. "Certainly!"

Mr. Thorndyke threw the paper upon the table.

"Well," he said, "I have no doubt it is an excellent piece of literary work—a satire I suppose you would call it—and I must congratulate you upon its complete success. I don't mind running the theater at a financial loss, but I have a distinct objection to being made a laughingstock of. I suppose this paper appeared about two hours ago, and already I can't move a yard without having to suffer the condolences of some sympathizing ass. I shall close the theater next week."

"That is, naturally," Matravers said, "a matter of complete indifference to me. In the cause of art I should say that you will do well, unless you can select a play from a very different source. When I wrote of the performance last night, I wrote according to my convictions. You," he added, turning to Berenice, "will at least believe that, I am sure!"

"Most certainly I do," she assured him, holding out her hand. "Must you really go? You will come and see me again—very soon?"

He bowed over her fingers, and then their eyes met for a moment. She was very pale, but she looked at him bravely. He realized suddenly that Mr. Thorndyke's threat was a serious blow to her.

"I am very sorry," he said. "You will not bear me any ill will?"

"None!" she answered. "You may be sure of that!"

She walked with him to the open door, outside which the servant was waiting to show him downstairs.

"You will come and see me again—very soon?" she repeated.

"Yes," he answered simply, "if I may, I shall come again. I will come as soon as you care to have me!"

CHAPTER V.

Matravers passed out into the street with a curious admixture of sensations in a mind usually so free from any confusion of sentiments or ideas. The few words which he had been compelled to

exchange with Thorndyke had grated very much against his sense of what was seemly. He was, on the whole, both repelled and fascinated by the incidents of this visit of his. Yet as he walked leisurely homeward through the bright, crowded streets, he recognized the existence of that strange personal charm in Berenice of which so many people had written and spoken. He himself had become subject to it in some slight degree—not enough, indeed, to engross his mind, yet enough to prevent any feeling of disappointment at the result of his visit.

She was not an ordinary woman—she was not an ordinarily clever woman. She did not belong to any type with which he was acquainted. She must forever occupy a place of her own in his thoughts and in his estimation. It was a place very well defined, he told himself, and by no means within that inner circle of his brain and heart wherein lay the few things in life sweet and precious to him.

The vague excitement of the early morning seemed to him now, as he moved calmly along the crowded, fashionable thoroughfare, a thing altogether unreal and unnatural. He had been in an emotional frame of mind, he told himself with a quiet smile, when the sight of those few lines in a handwriting then unknown had so curiously stirred him. Now that he had seen and spoken to her, her personality would recede to its proper proportions, the old philosophic calm which hung around him in his studious life like a mantle would have no further disturbance.

And then he suffered a rude shock! As he passed the corner of a street, the perfume of Neapolitan violets came floating out from a florist's shop upon the warm, sunlit air. Every fiber of his being quivered with a sudden emotion! The interior of that little room was before him, and a woman's eyes looked into his. He clenched his hands and walked swiftly on, with pale face and rigid lips, like a man oppressed with some acute physical pain.

There must be nothing of this for him! It was part of a world which

was not his world—of which he must never even be a temporary denizen. The thing passed away! With studious care he fixed his mind upon trifles. There was a crease in his silk hat, clearly visible as he glanced at his reflection in a plate-glass window. He turned into Scott's, and waited while it was ironed. Then he walked homeward and spent the remainder of the day carefully revising a bundle of proofs which he found on his table fresh from the printer.

On the following morning he lunched at his club. Somehow, although he was in no sense of the word an unpopular man, it was a rare thing for any one to seek his company uninvited. The scholarly exclusiveness of his Oxford days had not been altogether brushed off in this contact with a larger and more spontaneous social life, and he figured in a world which would gladly have known more of him, as a man of courteous but severe reserve.

To-day he occupied his usual round table set in an alcove before a tall window. For a recluse, he always found a singular pleasure in watching the faces of the people in that broad, living stream, little units in the wheeling cycle of humanity of which he, too, felt himself to be a part; but to-day his eyes were idle, and his sympathies obstructed.

Although a pronounced epicure in both food and drink, he passed a new and delicate entrée, and not only ordered the wrong claret, but drank it without a grimace. The world of his sensations had been rudely disturbed. For the moment his sense of proportion was at fault, and before luncheon was over it received a further shock.

A handsomely appointed drag rattled past the club on its way into Piccadilly. The woman who occupied the front seat turned to look at the window as they passed, with some evident curiosity, and their eyes met. Matravers set down the glass, which he had been in the act of raising to his lips, untasted.

"Berenice and her father confessor!"

he heard some one remark lightly from the next table. "Pity some one can't teach Thorndyke how to drive. He's a disgrace to the four-in-hand."

It was Berenice! The sight of her in such intimate association with a man utterly distasteful to him was one before which he winced and suffered. He was aware of a new and altogether undesired experience. To rid himself of it with all possible speed, he finished his lunch abruptly, and lighting a cigarette, started back to his rooms.

On the way he came face to face with Ellison, and the two men stood together upon the pavement for a moment or two.

"I am not quite sure," Ellison remarked with a little grimace, "whether I want to speak to you or not! What on earth has kindled the destructive spirit in you to such an extent? Every one is talking of your attack upon the New Theater."

"I was sent," Matravers answered, "with a free hand to write an honest criticism—and I did it. The work of that playwright may have some merit, but it is unclean work. It is not fit for the English stage."

"It is exceedingly unlikely," Ellison remarked, "that the English stage will know him any more. No play could survive such an onslaught as yours. I hear that Thorndyke is going to close the theater."

"If it was opened," Matravers said, "for the purpose of presenting such work as this latest production, the sooner it is closed the better."

Ellison shrugged his shoulders.

"It is a large subject," he said, "and I am not sure that we are of one mind. We will not discuss it. At any rate, I am very sorry for Berenice."

"I do not think," Matravers said in measured tones, "that you need be sorry for her. With her gifts she will scarcely remain long without an engagement. I trust that she may secure one which will not involve the prostitution of her talent."

Ellison laughed shortly. He had an immense admiration for Matravers, but

just at present he was a little out of temper with him.

"You admit her talent, then?" he remarked. "I am glad of that."

"I am not sure," Matravers said, "that talent is the proper word to use. One might almost call it genius."

Ellison was considerably mollified.

"I am glad to hear you say so," he declared. "At the same time I am afraid her position will be rather an awkward one. She will lose some money by the closing of the theater, and I don't exactly see what London house is open for her just at present. These actor-managers are all so clannish, and they have their own women."

"I am sorry," Matravers said thoughtfully. "At the same time I cannot believe that she will remain very long undiscovered. Good afternoon. I am forgetting that I have some writing to do."

Matravers walked slowly back to his rooms, filled with a new and fascinating idea which Ellison's words had suddenly suggested to him. If it was true that his pen had done her this ill turn, did he not owe her some reparation? It would be a very pleasant way to pay his debt and a very simple one. By the time he had reached his destination the idea had taken definite hold of him.

For several hours he worked at the revision of a certain manuscript, polishing and remodeling with infinite care and pains. Not even content with the correct and tasteful arrangement of his sentences, he read them over to himself aloud, lest by any chance there should have crept into them some trick of alliteration, or juxtaposition of words not entirely musical. In his work he gained, or seemed to gain, a complete absorption. The cloudy disquiet of the last few hours appeared to have passed away—to have been, indeed, only a fugitive and transitory thing.

At half past four his servant brought in a small tea equipage—a silver tray, with an old blue Worcester teapot and cup, and a quaintly cut glass cream jug. He made his tea, and drank it with his pen still in his hand. He had scarcely turned back to his work, be-

fore the same servant reëntered carrying a frock coat, an immaculately brushed silk hat, and a fresh bunch of Neapolitan violets. For a moment Ma-travers hesitated; then he laid down his pen, changed his coat, and once more passed out into the streets, more brilliant than ever now with the afternoon sunshine. He joined the throng of people leisurely making their way toward the park.

CHAPTER VI.

For nearly half an hour he sat in his usual place under the trees, watching with indifferent eyes the constant stream of carriages passing along the drive. It seemed to him only a few hours since he had sat there before, almost in the same spot, a solitary figure in the cold, gray twilight, yet watching then, even as he was watching now, for that small victoria with its single occupant whose soft, dark eyes had met his so often with a frank curiosity which she had never troubled to conceal.

Something of that same perturbation of spirit which had driven him then out into the dawn-lit streets was upon him once more, only with a very real and tangible difference. The gray half lights, the ghostly shadows, and the faint wind sounding in the treetops like the rising and falling of a midnight sea upon some lonely shore, had given to his early morning dreams an indefiniteness which they could scarcely hope to possess now. He himself was a living unit of this gay and brilliant world, whose conversation and light laughter filled the sunlit air around him, whose skirts were brushing against his knees, and whose jargon fell upon his ears with a familiar and a kindly sound. There was no possibility here for such a wave of passion—he could call it nothing else—as had swept through him when he had first read that brief message from the woman who had already become something of a disturbing element in his seemly life.

Yet under a calm exterior he was

conscious of a distinct tremor of excitement when her carriage drew up within a few feet of him, and obeying her mute but smiling command, he rose and offered his hand as she stepped out onto the path.

"This," she remarked, resting her daintily gloved fingers for a moment in his, "is the beginning of a new order of things. Do you realize that only the day before yesterday we passed one another here with a polite stare?"

"I remember it," he answered, "perfectly. Long may the new order last!"

"But it is not going to last long—with me at any rate," she said, laughing. "Don't you know that I am almost ruined? Mr. Thorndyke is going to close the theater. He says that we have been losing money every week. I shall have to sell my horses, and go and live in the suburbs."

"I hope," he said fervently, "that you will not find it so bad as that."

"Of course," she remarked, "you know that yours is the hand which has given us our death blow. I have just read your notice. It is a brilliant piece of satirical writing, of course, but need you have been quite so severe? Don't you regret your handiwork a little?"

"I cannot," he answered deliberately. "On the contrary, I feel that I have done you a service. If you do not agree with me to-day, the time will certainly come when you will do so. You have a gift which delighted me; you are really an actress; you are one of very few."

"That is a kind speech," she answered; "but even if there is truth in it, I am as yet quite unrecognized. There is no other theater open to me. You and I look upon a certain style of play from a different point of view; but, even if you are right, the part of *Herdine* suited me. I was beginning to get some excellent notices. If we could have kept the thing going for only a few weeks longer, I think that I might have established some sort of a reputation."

He sighed.

"A reputation, perhaps," he admitted; "but not of the best order. You

do not wish to be known only as the portrayer of unnatural passions, the interpreter of diseased desires. It would be an ephemeral reputation. It might lead you into many strange byways, but it would never help you to rise. Art is above all things catholic. You may be a perfect *Herdrine*; but *Herdrine* herself is but a night weed—a thing of no account. Even you cannot make her natural. She is the puppet of a man's fantasy. She is never a woman."

"I suppose," she said sorrowfully, "that your judgment is the true one, yet— But we will talk of something else. How strange to be walking here with you!"

Berenice was always a much-observed woman, but to-day she seemed to attract more even than ordinary attention. Her personality, her toilet, which was superb, and her companion, were all alike interesting to the slowly moving throng of men and women among whom they were threading their way.

The attitude of her sex toward Berenice was in a certain sense a paradox. She was distinctly the most talented and the most original of all the "petticoat apostles," as the very man who was now walking by her side had scornfully described the little band of women writers who were accused of trying to launch upon society a new type of their own sex. Her last novel was flooding all the bookstalls; and if not of the day, was certainly the book of the hour. She herself, known before only as a brilliant journalist writing under a curious pseudonym, had suddenly become one of the most marked figures in London life.

Yet she had not gone so far as other writers who had dealt with the same subject. Marriage, she had dared to write, had become the whitewashing of the impure, the sanctifying of the vicious. But she had not added the almost natural corollary—therefore let there be no marriage. On the contrary, marriage in the ideal she had written of as the most wonderful and

the most beautiful thing in life—only marriage in the ideal did not exist.

She had never posed as a woman with a mission. She formulated nowhere any scheme for the reorganization of those social conditions whose bases she had very eloquently and very trenchantly held to be rotten and impure. She had written as a prophet of woe. She had preached only destruction, and from the first she had left her readers curious as to what sexual system could possibly replace the old.

The thing which happened was inevitable. The amazing demand for her book was exactly in inverse proportion to its popularity among her sex. The crusade against men was well. Admittedly they were a bad lot, and needed to be told of it. A little self-assertion on behalf of his superior was a thing to be encouraged and applauded. But a crusade against marriage! Berenice must be a most abandoned, as well as a most immoral, woman. No one who even hinted at the doctrine of love without marriage could be altogether respectable.

Not that Berenice had ever done that. Still, she had written of marriage—the usual run of marriages—from a woman's point of view, as a very hateful thing.

What did she require, then, of her sex? To live and die old maids, while men became regenerated? It was too absurd.

There were a good many curious things said, and it was certainly true that since she had gone upon the stage her toilet and equipage were unrivaled. Berenice looked into the eyes of the women whom she met day by day, and she read their verdict. But if she suffered, she said nothing.

They passed out from the glancing shadows of the trees toward the Piccadilly entrance. Here they paused for a moment and stood together looking down the drive. The sunlight seemed to touch with quivering fire the brilliant phantasmagoria. Berenice was serious. Her dark eyes swept down the broad path and her under lip quivered.

"It is this," she exclaimed, with a slight forward movement of her parasol, "which makes me long for an earthquake. Can one do anything for women like that? They are not the creations of a God; they are the parasitical images of type. Only it is a very small type and a very large reproduction. Why do I say these things to you, I wonder? You are against me, too. But then you are not a woman."

"I am not against you in your detestation of type," he answered. "The whole world of our sex as well as yours is full of worn-out and effete reproductions of an unworthy model. It is this intolerable sameness which suffocates all thought. One meets it everywhere; the deep melancholy of our days is its fruit. But the children of this generation will never feel it. The taste of life between their teeth will be like neither ashes nor green figs. They are numbed."

She flashed a look almost of anger upon him.

"Yet you have ranged yourself upon their side. When my story first appeared, its fate hung for days in the balance. Women had not made up their minds how to take it. It came into your hands for review. Well! You did not spare it, did you? It was you who turned the scale. Your denunciation became the keynote of popular opinion concerning me. The women for whose sake I had written it, that they might at least strike one blow for freedom, took it with a virtuous shudder from the hands of their daughters. I was pronounced unwholesome and depraved; even my personal character was torn into shreds. How odd it all seems," she added, with a light, mirthless laugh. "It was you who put into their hands the weapon with which to scourge me. Their trim, self-satisfied little sentences of condemnation are emasculated versions of your judgment. It is you whom I have to thank for the closing of the theater and the failure of 'Herdrine'—you who are responsible for the fact that the women look at me with insolence. How strange it must seem to them to see us together

—the wolf and the lamb. Well, never mind! Take me somewhere and give me some tea; you owe me that, at any rate."

They turned and left the park. For a few minutes conversation was impossible, but as soon as they had emerged from the crowd he answered her.

"If I have ever helped any one to believe ill of you," he said slowly, "I am only too happy that they should have the opportunity of seeing us together. You are rather severe on me. I thought then, as I think now, that it is—to put it mildly—impolitic to enter upon a passionate denunciation of such an institution as marriage when any substitute for it must necessarily be another step upon the downward grade. The decadence of self-respect among young men, any contrast between their lives and the lives of the women who are brought up to be their wives, is too terribly painful a subject for us to discuss here. Forgive me if I think now, as I have always thought, that it is not a fitting subject for a novelist—certainly not for a woman. I may be prejudiced; yet it was my duty to write as I thought. You must not forget that. So far as your story went, I had nothing but praise for it. There were many chapters which only an artist could have written."

She raised her eyebrows. They had turned into Bond Street now, and were close to their destination.

"You men of letters are so odd," she exclaimed. "What is art but truth? And if my book be not true, how can it know anything of art? But never mind. We are talking shop, and I am a little tired of taking life seriously. Here we are. Order me some tea, please, and a chocolate éclair."

He followed her to a tiny round table, and sat down by her side upon the cushioned seat. As he gave his order and looked around the little room, he smiled gravely to himself. It was the first time in his life—at any rate since his boyhood—that he had taken a woman into a public room. Definitely it was a new era for him.

CHAPTER VII.

An incident, which Matravers had found once or twice uppermost in his mind during the last few days, was recalled to him with sudden vividness as he took his seat in an ill-lit, shabbily upholstered box in the second tier of the New Theater. He seemed almost to hear again the echoes of that despairing cry which had rung out so plaintively across the desert of empty benches from somewhere among the shadows of the auditorium. Several times during the performance he had glanced up in the same direction; once he had almost fancied he could see a solitary, bent figure sitting rigid in the first row of the amphitheater.

No man was possessed of a smaller share of curiosity in the ordinary sense of the word than Matravers; but the thought that this might be the same man, come again to witness a play which had appealed to him before with such peculiar potency, interested him curiously.

At the close of the second act he left his seat, and, after several times losing his way, found himself in the little narrow space behind the amphitheater. Leaning over the partition, and looking downward, he had a good view of the man who sat there quite alone, his head resting upon his hand, his eyes fixed steadily upon a soiled and crumpled program, which was spread out carefully before him. Matravers wondered whether there was not in the clumsy figure and awkward pose something vaguely familiar to him.

An attendant of the place standing by his side addressed him respectfully. "Not much of a house for the last night, sir," he remarked.

Matravers agreed, and moved his head downward toward the solitary figure.

"There is one man, at least," he said, "who finds the play interesting."

The attendant smiled.

"I am afraid that the gentleman is a little bit 'hoff,' sir. He seems half silly to talk to. He's a queer sort, anyway. Comes here every blessed night,

and in the same place. Never misses. Once he came sixpence short, and there was a rare fuss. They wouldn't let him in, and he wouldn't go away. I lent it to him at last."

"Did he pay you back?" Matravers asked.

"The very next night; never had to ask him, either. There goes the bell, sir. Curtain up in two minutes."

The subject of their conversation had not once turned his head or moved toward them. Matravers, conscious that he was likely to do so, returned to his seat just as the curtain rose upon the last act. The play, grim, pessimistic, yet lifted every now and then to a higher level by strange flashes of genius on the part of the woman, dragged wearily along to an end. The echoes of her last speech died away; she looked at him across the footlights, her dark eyes soft with many regrets, which, consciously or not, spoke to him also of reproach. The curtain descended, and her hands fell to her side. It was the end, and it was failure.

Matravers, making his way more hurriedly than usual from the house, hoped to gain another glimpse of the man who had remained the solitary tenant of the round of empty seats. But he was too late. The man and the audience had melted away in a thin little stream. Matravers stood on the curbstone, hesitating. He had not meant to go behind to-night. He had a feeling that she must be regarding him at that moment as the executioner of her ambitions. Besides, she was going on to a reception; she would only be in a hurry.

Nevertheless, he made his way round to the stage door. He would at least have a glimpse of her. But as he turned the corner, she was already stepping into her carriage. He paused, and simultaneously with her disappearance he realized that he was not the only one who had found his way to the narrow street to see the last of Berenice.

A man was standing upon the opposite pavement a little way from the carriage, yet at such an angle that a

faint, yellow light shone upon what was visible of his pale face. He had watched her come out, and was gazing now fixedly at the window of her brougham.

Matravers knew in a moment that this was the man whom he had seen sitting alone in the amphitheater; and almost without any definite idea as to his purpose, he crossed the street toward him. The man, hearing his footstep, looked up with a sudden start; then, without a second's hesitation, he turned and hurried off. Matravers still followed him. The man heard his footsteps, and turned round; then, with a little moan, he started running, his shoulders bent, his head forward. Matravers halted at once. The man plunged into the shadows, and was lost among the stream of people pouring forth from the door of the Strand theaters.

At her door an hour later Berenice saw the outline of a figure now become very familiar to her, and Matravers, who had been leaving a box of roses, whose creamy pink-and-white blossoms, mingled together in a neighboring flower shop, had pleased his fancy, heard his name called softly across the pavement. He turned, and saw Berenice stepping from her carriage. With an old-fashioned courtesy, which always sat well upon him, he offered her his arm.

"I thought that you were to be late," he said, looking down at her with a shade of anxiety in his clear, grave face. "Was not this Lady Truton's night?"

She nodded.

"Yes; don't talk to me—just yet. I am upset! Come in and sit with me."

He hesitated. With a scrupulous delicacy, which sometimes almost irritated her, he had invariably refrained from paying her visits so late as this. But to-night was different. Her fingers were clasping his arm—and she was in trouble. He suffered himself to be led up the stairs into her little room.

"Some coffee for two," she told her woman. "You can go to bed then. I shall not want you again."

She threw herself into an empty chair, and loosened the silk ribbons of her opera cloak.

"Do you mind opening the window?" she asked. "It is stifling in here. I can scarcely breathe."

He threw it wide open, and wheeled her chair up to it. The glare from the West End lit up the dark sky. The silence of the little room and the empty street below seemed deepened by that faint, far-away roar from the pandemonium of pleasure. A light from the opposite side of the way—or was it the rising moon behind the dark houses?—gleamed upon her white throat and in her soft, dim eyes. She lay quite still, looking into vacancy. Her hand hung over the side of the chair nearest to him. Half consciously he took it up and stroked it soothingly. The tears gushed from her eyes. At his kindly touch her overwrought feelings gave way. Her fingers closed spasmodically upon his.

He said nothing. The time had passed when words were necessary between them. They were near enough to one another now to understand the value of silence. But those few moments seemed to him forever like a landmark in his life. A new relation was born between them in the passionate intensity of that deep quietness.

He watched her bosom cease to heave, and the dimness pass from her eyes. Then he took up the box which he had been carrying, and emptied the pink-and-white blossoms into her lap. She stooped down and buried her face in them. Their faint, delicate perfume seemed to fill the room.

"You are very good," she said abruptly. "Thank God that there is some one who is good to me."

The coffee was in the room, and Berenice threw off her cloak and brought it to him. A fit of restlessness seemed to have followed upon her moment of weakness. She began walking with quick, uneven steps up and down the room.

Matravers forgot to drink his coffee. He was watching her with a curious sense of emotional excitement. The

little chamber was full of half lights and shadows, and there seemed to him something almost unearthly about this woman with her soft, gray gown and marble face. He was stirred by her presence in a new way. The rustle of her silken skirts as she swept in and out of the dim light, the delicate whiteness of her arms and throat, the flashing of a single diamond in her dark, coiled hair—these seemed trivial things enough, yet they were yielding him a new and mysterious pleasure.

For the first time his sense of her beauty was fully aroused. Every now and then he caught faint glimpses of her face. It was like the face of a new woman to him. There was some tender and wonderful change there, which he could not understand, and yet which seemed to strike some responsive chord in his own emotions.

Instinctively he felt that she was passing into a new phase of life. Surely, he, too, was walking hand and hand with her through the shadows. The touch of her interlaced fingers had burned his flesh.

Presently she came and sat down beside him.

"Forgive me," she murmured. "It does me so much good to have you here. I am very foolish."

"Tell me about it."

She frowned very slightly, and looked away at a star.

"It is nothing. It is beginning to seem less than nothing. I have written a book for women, for the sake of women, because my heart ached for their sufferings, and because I, too, have felt the fire. I wonder whether it was really an evil book," she added, still looking away from him at that single star in the dark sky. "People say so. The newspapers say so. Yet it was a true book. I wrote it from my soul; I wrote it with my own blood. I have not been a good woman, but I have been a pure woman. When I wrote it, I was lonely; I have always been lonely. But I thought, now I shall know what it is like to have friends. Many women will understand that I have suffered in doing this thing for their sakes, for

it is my own life which I lay bare, my own life, my own sufferings, my own agony. I thought, they will come to me and they will thank me for it. I shall have sympathy and I shall have friends.

"And now my book is written, and I am wiser. I know now that woman does not want her freedom. Though they drag her down into hell, the chains of her slavery have grown around her heart and have become precious to her. Tell me, are those pure women who willingly give their souls and their bodies in marriage to men who have sinned and who will sin again? They do it without disguise, without shame, for position, or for freedom, or for money. Yet there are other women from whose touch they snatch away the hem of their skirts in horror. Oh, it is terrible. There can be no corruption worse than this in hell."

"Yours has been the common disappointment of all reformers," he said gravely. "Gratitude is the rarest tribute the world ever offers to those who have labored to cleanse it. When you are a little older you will have learned your lesson. But it is always very hard to learn. Tell me about to-night."

She raised her head a little. A faint spot of color stained her cheek.

"There was one woman who praised me, who came to see me, and sent me cards to go to her house. To-night I went. Foolishly I had hoped a good deal from it. I did not like Lady Truton herself, but I hoped that I should meet other women there who would be different. It was a new experience to me to be going among my own sex. I was like a child going to her first party. I was quite excited, almost nervous. I had a little dream; there would be some women there—one would be enough—with whom I might be friends, and it would make life very different to me to have even one woman friend. But they were all horrid. They were vulgar, and one woman—she took me on one side and praised my book. She agreed, she said, with every word in it. She had found out that her husband was unfaithful to her, and she

was repaying him in his own coin. She dared to assume that I—I should approve of her conduct; she asked me to go and see her. It was hideous."

Matravers laid his hand upon hers, and leaned forward in his chair.

"Lady Truton's was the very worst house you could have gone to," he said gently. "You must not be too discouraged all at once. The women of her set, thank God, are not in the least typical Englishwomen. They are fast and silly—a few, I am afraid, worse. They make use of the free discussions in these days of the relations between our sexes, to excuse grotesque extravagance in dress and habits which society ought never to pardon. Do not let their judgments or their misinterpretations trouble you. You are as far above them, Berenice, as that little star is from us."

"I do not pretend to be anything but a woman," she said, bending her head, "and to stand alone always is very hard."

"It is very hard for a man. It must be very much harder for a woman. But, Berenice, you would not call yourself absolutely friendless."

She raised her head for a moment. Her dark eyes were wonderfully soft.

"Who is there that cares?" she murmured.

He touched the tips of her fingers. Her soft, warm hand yielded itself readily, and slid into his.

"Do I count for no one?" he whispered.

There was a silence in the little room. The yellow glare had faded from the sky, and a night wind was blowing softly in. A clock in the distance struck one. Together they sat and gazed upon the darkness.

Looking more than once into her pale face, Matravers realized again that wonderful change. His own emotions were curiously disturbed. He, himself, so remarkable through all his life for a changeless serenity of purpose, and a fixed, masterly control over his whole environment, felt himself suddenly like a rudderless ship at the mercy of a great, unknown sea. A sense of drift-

ing was upon him. They were both drifting. Surely this little room, with its dim light and shadows and its faint odor of roses, had become a hotbed of tragedy. He had imagined that death itself was something like this—a dissolution of all fixed purposes. And with it all, this remnant of life, if it were but a remnant, seemed suddenly to be flowing through his veins with all the rich, surpassing sweetness of some exquisite symphony.

"You count for a great deal," she said softly. "If you had not come to me, I think that I must have died. If I were to lose you, I think that I should die."

She threw herself back in her chair with a gesture of complete abandonment. Her arms hung loosely down over its sides. The moonlight, which had been gradually gathering strength, shone softly upon her pale face and on the soft, lustrous pearls at her throat. Her dark, wet eyes seemed touched with smoldering fire. She looked at him. He sprang to his feet and walked restlessly up and down the room. His forehead was hot and dry, and his hands were trembling.

"There is not any reason," he said, halting suddenly in front of her, "why we should lose one another. I was coming to-morrow morning to make a proposition to you. If you accept it, we shall be forced to see a great deal of one another."

"Yes?"

"You perhaps did not know that I had my ambitions as a dramatic author. Yet my first serious work after I left Oxford was a play. I have never done anything with it until yesterday."

"You have really written a play," she murmured, "and you never told me."

"At least I am telling you now," he reminded her. "I am telling you before any one, because I want your help."

"You want what?"

"I want you to help me by taking the part of my heroine. I read it yesterday by appointment to Fergusson. He accepted it at once on the most lib-

eral terms. I told him there was one condition—that the part of my heroine must be offered to you, if you would accept it. There was a little difficulty, as, of course, Miss Robinson is a figure at the Pall Mall. However, Fergusson saw you last night from the back of the dress circle, and this morning he has agreed. It only remains for you to read—or allow me to read to you—the play.”

“Do you mean to say that you are offering me the principal part in a play of yours—at the Pall Mall—with Fergusson?”

“Well, I think that is about what it comes to,” he assented.

She rose to her feet and took his hands in hers.

“You are too good—much too good to me,” she said softly. “I dare not take it; I am not strong enough.”

“It will be you, or no one,” he said decidedly. “But first I am going to read you the play. If I may, I shall bring it to you to-morrow.”

“I want to ask you something,” she said abruptly. “You must answer me faithfully. You are doing this, you are making me this offer, because you think that you owe me something. It is a sort of reparation for your attack upon ‘Herdine.’ I want to know if it is that.”

“I can assure you,” he said earnestly, “that I am not nearly so conscientious. I wrote the play solely as a literary work. I had no thought of having it produced, or offering it to anybody. Then I saw you at the New Theater; I think that you inspired me with a sort of dramatic excitement. I went home and read my play. *Bathilde* seemed to me then to speak with your tongue, to look at me with your eyes, to be clothed from her soul outward with your personality. In the morning I wrote to Fergusson.”

“I want to believe you,” she said softly; “but it seems so strange. I am no actress like Adelaide Robinson; I am afraid that, if I accept your offer, I may hurt the play. She is popular, and I am unknown.”

“She has talent,” he said, “and ex-

perience; you have genius, which is far above either. I am not leaving you any choice at all. To-morrow I shall bring the play.”

“You may at least do that,” she answered. “It will be a pleasure to hear it read. Come to luncheon, and we will have a long afternoon.”

Matravers took his leave with a sense of relief. Their farewell had been cordial enough, but unemotional. Yet even he, ignorant of women and their ways as he was, was conscious that they had entered together upon a new phase of their knowledge of each other. The touch of their fingers, the few conventional words which passed between them, as she leaned over the staircase watching him descend, seemed to him to savor somehow of mockery.

He passed out from her presence into the cool, soft night, dazed, not a little bewildered at this new, strong sense of living, which had set his pulses beating to music and sent his blood rushing through his body with a new sweetness.

Yet with it all he was distressed and unhappy. He was confronted with the one great influence of life against which he had deliberately set his face.

CHAPTER VIII.

Matravers began to find himself, for the first time in his life, seriously attracted by a woman. He realized it in some measure as he walked homeward in the early morning, after this last interview with Berenice; he knew it for an absolute fact on the following evening as he walked through the crowded streets back to his rooms with the manuscript of the play which he had been reading to her in his pocket. He felt himself moving in what was to some extent an unreal atmosphere. His senses were tingling with the excitement of the last few hours—for the first time he knew the full fascination of a woman's intellectual sympathy.

He had gone to his task wholly devoid of any pleasurable anticipation. It spoke much for the woman's tact that before he had read half a dozen

pages he was not only completely at his ease, but was experiencing a new and very pleasurable sensation. The memory of it was with him now; he had no mind to disturb it by any vague alarm as to the future of their relationship.

In Piccadilly he met Fergusson, who turned and walked with him.

"I have been to your rooms, Matravers," the actor said. "I want to know whether you have arranged with your friend?"

"I have just left her," Matravers replied. "She appears to like the play, and has consented to play *Bathilde*."

The actor smiled. Was Matravers really so simple, or did he imagine that an actress whose name was as yet unknown would hesitate to play with him at the Pall Mall Theater? Yet he himself had been hoping that there might be some difficulty. He had a *Bathilde* of his own who would take a great deal of pacifying. The thing was settled now, however.

"I should like," he said, "to make her acquaintance at once."

"I have thought of that," Matravers said. "Will you lunch with me at my rooms on Sunday and meet her? That is, of course, if she is able to come."

"I shall be delighted," Fergusson answered. "About two, I suppose?"

Matravers assented, and the two men parted. The actor, with a little shrug of his shoulders and the air of a man who has an unpleasant task before him, turned southward to interview the lady who certainly had the first claim to play *Bathilde*.

He found her at home and anxiously expecting him.

"If you had not come to-day," she remarked, "I should have sent for you. I want you to contradict that rubbish."

She threw the theatrical paper across at him, and watched him, while he read the paragraph to which she had pointed. He laid the paper down.

"I cannot altogether contradict it," he said. "There is some truth in what the man writes."

The lady was getting angry. She came over to Fergusson and stood by his side.

"You mean to tell me," she exclaimed, "that you have accepted a play for immediate production which I have not even seen, and in which the principal part is to be given to one of those crackpots down at the New Theater—an amateur, an outsider—a woman no one ever heard of before?"

"You can't exactly say that," he interposed calmly. "I see you have her novel on your table there, and she is a woman who has been talked about a good deal lately. But the facts of the case are these: Matravers brought me a play a few days ago which almost took my breath away. It is by far the best thing of the sort I ever read. It is bound to be a great success. I can't tell you any more now—you shall read it yourself in a day or two. He was very easy to deal with as to terms, but he made one condition; that a certain part in it—the principal one, I admit—should be offered to this woman. I tried all I could to talk him out of it, but absolutely without effect. I was forced to consent. There is not a manager in London who would not jump at the play on any conditions. You know our position. 'Her Majesty' is a failure, and I haven't a single decent thing to put on. I simply dared not let such a chance as this go by."

"I never heard anything so ridiculous in my life," the lady exclaimed. "No, I'm not blaming you, Reggie. I don't suppose you could have done anything else. But this woman—what a nerve she must have to imagine that she can do it. I see her horrid, Norwegian play has come to utter grief at the New Theater."

"She is a clever woman," Fergusson remarked. "One can only hope for the best."

She flashed a quiet glance at him.

"You know her, then—you have been to see her?"

"Not yet," Fergusson answered. "I am going to meet her to-morrow. Matravers has asked me to lunch."

"Tell me about Matravers," she said.

"I am afraid I do not know much. He is a very distinguished literary man, but his work has generally been critical or philosophical—every one will be surprised to hear that he has written a play. You will find that there will be quite a stir about it. The reason why we have no plays nowadays, which can possibly be classed as literature, is because the wrong class of man is writing for the stage. Smith and Francis and all these men have fine dramatic instincts, but they are not scholars. Their dialogue is mostly beneath contempt; there is a dash of conventionality in their best work. Now, Matravers is a writer of an altogether different type."

"Thanks," she interrupted, "but I don't want a homily. I am only curious about the man himself."

Fergusson pulled himself up, a little annoyed. He had begun to talk about a subject of peculiar interest to him.

"Oh, the man himself is rather an interesting personality," he declared. "He is a recluse, a dilettante, and a very brilliant man of letters."

"I want to know," the lady said impatiently, "whether he is married."

"Married! Certainly not," Fergusson assured her.

"Very well, then, I am going there to luncheon with you to-morrow."

Fergusson looked blank.

"But, my dear girl," he protested, "how on earth—"

"Don't be foolish, Reggie," she said calmly. "It is perfectly natural for me to go. I have been your principal actress for several seasons. I suppose, if there is a second woman's part in the piece, it will be mine, if I choose to take it. You must write and ask Matravers for permission to bring me. You can mention my desire to meet the new actress if you like."

Fergusson took up his hat.

"Matravers is not the sort of man one feels like taking a liberty with," he said. "But I'll try him."

"You can let me know to-night at the theater," she directed.

CHAPTER IX.

Nothing short of a miracle could have made Matravers' luncheon party a complete success; yet, so far as Berenice was concerned, it could scarcely be looked upon in any other light. Her demeanor toward Adelaide Robinson and Fergusson was such as to give absolutely no opportunity for anything disagreeable. She frankly admitted both her inexperience and her ignorance. Yet, before they left, both Fergusson and his companion began to understand Matravers' confidence in her. There was something almost magnetically attractive about her personality.

The luncheon was very much what one who knew him would have expected from Matravers—simple, yet served with exceeding elegance. The fruit, the flowers, and the wine had been his own care; and the table had very much the appearance of having been bodily transported from the palace of a noble of some southern land.

After the meal was over, they sat out upon the shaded balcony and sipped their coffee and liqueurs—Fergusson and Berenice wrapped in the discussion of many details of the work which lay before them, while Matravers, with an effort which he carefully concealed, talked continually with Adelaide Robinson.

"Is it true," she asked him, "that you did not intend your play for the stage—that you wrote it from a literary point of view only?"

"In a sense, that is quite true," he admitted. "I wrote it without any definite idea of offering it to any London manager. My doing so was really only an impulse."

"If Mr. Fergusson is right—and he is a pretty good judge—you won't regret having done so," she remarked. "He thinks it is going to have a big run."

"He may be right," Matravers answered. "For all our sakes, I hope so."

"It will be a magnificent opportunity for your friend."

Matravers looked over toward Berenice. She was talking eagerly to Fer-

gusson, whose dark, handsome head was very close to hers, and in whose eyes was already evident his growing admiration. Matravers was suddenly conscious of an odd sense of disturbance. He was grateful to Adelaide Robinson for her intervention. She had risen to her feet, and glanced downward at the little brougham drawn up below.

"I am so sorry to go," she said; "but I positively must make some calls this afternoon."

Fergusson rose also, with obvious regret, and they left together.

"Don't forget," he called back from the door; "we read our parts to-morrow, and rehearsals begin on Thursday."

"I have it all down," Berenice answered. "I will do my best to be ready for Thursday."

Berenice remained standing, looking thoughtfully after the brougham, which was being driven down Piccadilly.

Matravers came back to her, and laid his hand gently upon her arm.

"You must not think of going yet," he said. "I want you to stay and have tea with me."

"I should like to," she answered. "I seem to have so much to say to you."

He piled her chair with cushions and drew it back into the shade. Then he lit a cigarette, and sat down by her side.

"I suppose you must think that I am very ungrateful," she said. "I have scarcely said, 'thank you,' yet, have I?"

"You will please me best by never saying it," he answered. "I only hope that it will be a step you will never regret."

"How could I?"

He looked at her steadily, a certain grave concentration of thought manifest in his dark eyes. Berenice was looking her best that afternoon. She was certainly a very beautiful and a very distinguished-looking woman. Her eyes met his frankly; her lips were curved in a faintly tender smile.

"Well, I hardly know," he said. "You are going to be a popular actress. Henceforth the stage will have claims

upon you. It will become your career."

"You have plenty of confidence."

"I have absolute confidence in you," he declared, "and Fergusson is equally confident about the play. Chance has given you this opportunity—the result is beyond question. Yes, I confess that I have a presentiment. If the manuscript of 'The Heart of the People' were in my hands at this moment, I think that I would tear it into little pieces, and watch them flutter down onto the pavement there."

"I do not understand you," she said softly. "You say that you have no doubt—"

"It is because I have no doubt—it is because I know that it will make you a popular and a famous actress. You will gain this. I wonder what you will lose."

She moved restlessly on her chair.

"Why should I lose anything?"

"It is only a presentiment," he reminded her. "I pray that you may not lose anything. Yet you are coming under a very fascinating influence. It is your personality I am afraid of. You are going to belong definitely to a profession which is at once the most catholic and the most narrowing in the world. I believe that you are strong enough to stand alone, to remain yourself. I pray that it may be so, and yet, there is just the shadow of the presentiment. Perhaps it is foolish."

Their chairs were close together; he suddenly felt the perfume of her hair and the touch of her fingers upon his hand. Her face was quite close to his.

"At least," she murmured, "I pray that I may never lose your friendship."

"If only I could insure you as confidently the fulfillment of all your desires," he answered, "you would be a very happy woman. I am too lonely a man, Berenice, to part with any of my few joys. Whether you change or no, you must never change toward me."

She was silent. There were no signs left of the brilliant levity which had made their little luncheon party pass off

so successfully. She sat with her head resting upon her hand, gazing steadily up at the little white clouds which floated over the housetops. A tea equipage was brought out and deftly arranged between them.

"To-day," Matravers said, "I am going to have the luxury of having my tea made for me. Please come back from dreamland and realize the Englishman's idyl of domesticity."

She turned in her chair, and smiled upon him.

"I can do it," she assured him. "I believe you doubt my ability, but you need not."

They talked lightly for some time—an art which Matravers found himself to be acquiring with wonderful facility. Then there was a pause. When she spoke again, it was in an altogether different tone.

"I want you to answer me," she said; "it is not too late. Shall I give up *Bathilde*—and the stage? Listen! You do not know anything of my circumstances. I am not dependent upon either the stage or my writing for a living. I ask you for your honest advice. Shall I give it up?"

"You are placing a very heavy responsibility upon my shoulders," he answered her thoughtfully. "Yet I will try to answer you honestly. I should be happier if I could advise you to give it up. But I cannot. You have the gift; you must use it. The obligation of self-development is heaviest upon the shoulders of those whose foreheads Nature's twin sister has touched with fire. I would it were any other gift, Berenice; but that is only a personal feeling. No! You must follow out your destiny. You have an opportunity of occupying a unique and marvelous position. You can create a new ideal. Only be true always to yourself. Be very jealous indeed of absorbing any of the modes of thought and life which will spring up everywhere around you in the new world. Remember it is the old ideals which are the sweetest and the truest. Forgive me, please. I am talking like a pedagogue."

"You are talking as I like to be

talked to," she answered. "Yet you need not fear that my head will be turned, even if the success should come. You forget that I am almost an old woman. The religion of my life has long been conceived and fashioned."

He looked at her with a curious smile. If thirty seemed old to her, what must she think of him?

"I wonder," he said simply, "if you would think me impertinent if I were to ask you to tell more about yourself? How is it that you are altogether alone in the world?"

The words had scarcely left his lips before he would have given much to have recalled them. He saw her start, flinch back as though she had been struck, and a gray pallor spread itself over her face, almost to the lips. She looked at him fixedly for several moments without speaking.

"One day," she said, "I will tell you all that. You shall know everything. But not now; not yet."

"Whenever you will," he answered, ignoring her evident agitation. "Come! What do you say to a walk down through the park? To-day is a holiday for me—a day to be marked with a white stone. I have registered an oath that I will not even look at a pen. Will you not help me to keep it?"

"By all means," she answered blithely. "I will take you home with me, and keep you there till the hour of temptation has passed. To-day is to be my last day of idleness. I, too, have need of a white stone."

"We will place them," he said, "side by side."

CHAPTER X.

Matravers' luncheon party marked the termination for some time of any confidential intercourse between Berenice and himself. Every moment of her time was claimed by Fergusson, who, in his anxiety to produce a play from which he hoped so much before the wane of the season, gave no one any rest, and worked himself almost into a fever. There were two full rehearsals a day, and many private ones at her rooms.

Matravers, calling there now and then, found Fergusson always in possession, and by degrees gave it up in despair. He had a horror of interfering in any way, even of being asked for his advice concerning the practical reproduction of his work. Fergusson's invitations to the rehearsals at the theater he rejected absolutely.

As the time grew shorter, Berenice became pale and almost haggard with the unceasing work which Fergusson's anxiety imposed upon her. One night she sent for Matravers, and hastening to her rooms, he found her for the first time alone.

"I have sent Mr. Fergusson home," she exclaimed, welcoming him with outstretched hands, but making no effort to rise from her easy-chair. "Do you know that man is driving me slowly mad? I want you to interfere."

"What can I do?" he said.

"Anything to bring him to reason. He is overrehearsing. Every line, every sentence, every gesture, he makes the subject of the most exhaustive deliberation. He will have nothing spontaneous; it is positively stifling. A few more days of it and my reason will go. He is a great actor, but he does not seem to understand that to reduce everything to mathematical proportions is to court failure."

"I will go and see him," Matravers said. "You wish for no more rehearsals, then?"

"I do not want to see his face again before the night of the performance," she declared vehemently. "I am perfect in my part. I have thought about it—dreamed about it. I have lived more as *Bathilde* than as myself for the last three weeks. Perhaps," she continued more slowly, "you will not be satisfied. I scarcely dare to hope that you will be. Yet I have reached my limitations. The more I am made to rehearse now, the less natural I shall become."

"I will speak to Fergusson," Matravers promised. "I will go and see him to-night. But so far as you are concerned, I have no fear; you will be the

Bathilde of my heart and my brain. You cannot fail!"

She rose to her feet.

"It is," she said, "the desire of my life to make your *Bathilde* a creature of flesh and blood. If I fail, I will never act again."

"If you fail," he said, "the fault will be in my conception, not in your execution. But indeed we will not consider anything so improbable. Let us put the play behind us for a time and talk of something else. You must be weary of it."

She shook her head. "Not that! Never that! Just now it is my life, only it is the details which weary me, the eternal harping upon the mechanical side of it. Will you read to me for a little? And I will make you some coffee. You are not in a hurry, are you?"

"I have come," he said, "to stay with you until you send me away. I will read to you with pleasure. What will you have?"

She handed him a little volume of poems; he glanced at the title and made a faint grimace. They were his own.

Nevertheless, he read for an hour, till the streets below grew silent, and his own voice, unaccustomed to such exercise, lost something of its usual clearness. Then he laid the volume down, and there was silence between them.

"I have been thinking," he said at last, "of a singular incident in connection with your performance at the New Theater; something brought it into my mind just then. I meant to have mentioned it before."

She looked up with only a slight show of interest. Those days at the theater seemed to her now to be very far behind. There was nothing in connection with them which she cared to remember.

"It was the night of my first visit there," he continued. "There is a terrible scene at the end of the second act between *Herdrine* and her husband—you recollect it, of course. Just as you finished your denunciation, I distinctly heard a curious cry from the

back of the house. It was a greater tribute to your acting than the applause, for it was genuine."

"The piece was gloomy enough," she remarked, "to have dissolved the house in tears."

"At least," he said, "it wrung the heart of one man. For I have not told you all. I was interested enough to climb up into the amphitheater. The man sat there alone among a wilderness of empty seats. He was the picture of abject misery. I could scarcely see his face, but his attitude was convincing. It was not a thing of chance, either. I made some remark about him to an attendant, and he told me that night after night that man had occupied the same seat, always following every line of the play with the same mournful concentration, never moving from his seat from the beginning of the play to the end."

"He must have been," she declared, "a person of singularly morbid taste. When I think of it now I shiver. I would not play *Herdrine* again for worlds."

"I am very glad to hear you say so," he said, smiling. "Do you know that to me the most interesting feature of the play was its obvious effect upon this man. Its extreme pessimism is too much paraded, is laid on altogether with too thick a hand to ring true. The thing is an involved nightmare. One feels that as a work of art it is never convincing, yet underneath it all there must be something human, for it found its way into the heart of one man."

"It is possible," she remarked, "that he was mad. The man who found it sufficiently amusing to come to the theater night after night could scarcely have been in full possession of his senses."

"That is possible," he admitted; "but I do not believe it. The man's face was sad enough, but it was not the face of a madman."

"You did see his face, then?"

"On the last night of the play," he continued. "You remember you were going on to Lady Truton's, so I did not come behind. But I had a fancy

to see you for a moment, and I came round into Pitt Street just as you were driving off. On the other side of the way this man was standing, watching you."

She looked at him with a suddenly kindled interest—or was it fear?—in her dark eyes. The color had left her cheeks; she was white to the lips.

"Watching me?"

"Yes. As your carriage drove off he stood watching it. I don't know what prompted me, but I crossed the street to speak to him. He seemed such a lone, mournful figure standing there half-dazed, shabby, muttering softly to himself. But when he saw me coming, he gave one half-frightened look at me and ran—literally ran down the street on to the Strand. I could not follow—the police would have stopped him. So he disappeared."

"You saw his face. What was he like?"

Berenice had leaned right back among the yielding cushions of her divan, and he could scarcely see her face. Yet her voice sounded to him strange and forced. He looked at her in some surprise.

"I had a glimpse of it. It was an ordinary face enough; in fact, it disappointed me a little. But the odd part of it was that it seemed vaguely familiar to me. I have seen it before, often. Yet, try as I will, I cannot recollect where, or under what circumstances."

"At Oxford," she suggested. "By the bye, what was your college?"

"St. John's. No, I do not think—I hope that it was not at Oxford. Some day I shall think of it suddenly."

Berenice rose from her chair with a sudden, tempestuous movement and stood before him.

"Listen!" she exclaimed. "Supposing I were to tell you that I knew or could guess who that man was—why he came! Oh, if I were to tell you that I were a fraud, that—"

Matravers stopped her.

"I beg," he said, "that you will tell me nothing."

There was a short silence. Berenice

seemed on the point of breaking down. She was nervously lacing and interlacing her fingers. Her breath was coming spasmodically.

"Berenice," he said softly, "you are overwrought; you are not quite yourself to-night. Do not tell me anything. Indeed, there is no need for me to know; just as you are, I am content with you, and proud to be your friend."

"Ah!"

She sat down again. He could not see her face, but he fancied that she was weeping. He himself found his customary serenity seriously disturbed. Perhaps for the first time in his life he found himself not wholly the master of his emotions. The atmosphere of the little room, the perfume of the flowers, the soft beauty of the woman herself, whose breath fell almost upon his cheek, affected him as nothing of the sort had ever done before. He rose abruptly to his feet.

"You will be so much better alone," he said, taking her fingers and smoothing them softly in his for a moment. "I am going away now."

"Yes. Good-by!"

At the threshold he paused. She had not looked up at him. She was still sitting there with bowed head and hidden face. He closed the door softly, and went out.

CHAPTER XI.

The enthusiasm with which Matravers' play had been received on the night of its first appearance was, if anything, exceeded on the night before the temporary closing of the theater for the usual summer vacation. The success of the play itself had never been for a moment doubtful. For once the critics, the general press, and the public were in entire and happy agreement. The first night had witnessed an extraordinary scene. An audience as brilliant as any which could have been brought together in the first city in the world, had flatly refused to leave the theater until Matravers himself, reluctant and ill pleased, had joined Fergusson and Berenice before the footlights;

and now on the eve of its temporary withdrawal something of the same sort was threatened again, and Matravers only escaped by standing up in the front of his box, and bowing his acknowledgments to the delighted audience.

It was a well-deserved success, for certainly as a play it was a brilliant exception to anything which had lately been produced upon the English stage. The worn-out methods and motives of most living playwrights were rigorously avoided; everything about it was fresh and spontaneous. Its sentiment was relieved by the most delicate vein of humor. It was everywhere tender and human. The dialogue, to which Matravers had devoted his usual fastidious care, was polished and sprightly; there was not anywhere a single dull or unmusical line. It was a classic, the critics declared—the first literary play by a living author which London had witnessed for many years. The bookings for months ahead were altogether phenomenal. Fergusson saw a certain fortune within his hands, and Matravers, sharing also in the golden harvest, found another and a still greater cause for satisfaction.

For Berenice had justified his selection. The same night—as the greatest of critics, speaking through the columns of the principal daily paper, had said—which had presented to them a new writer for the stage, had given them also a new actress. She had surprised Matravers; she had amazed Fergusson, who found himself compelled to look closely to his own laurels. In short, she was a success, accorded, without demur or hesitation, a foremost place among the few accepted actresses. Her future and his position were absolutely secured, and her reputation, as Matravers was happy to think, was made, not as the portrayer of a sickly and unnatural type of diseased womanhood, but as the woman of his own creation, a very sweet and pure English lady.

The house emptied at last, and Matravers made his way behind, where many of Fergusson's friends had gath-

ered together, and where congratulations were the order of the day. A species of informal reception was going on, champagne cup and sandwiches were being handed around, and a general air of extreme good humor pervaded the place.

Berenice was the center of a group of men among whom Matravers was annoyed to see Thorndyke. If he could have withdrawn unseen, he would have done so; but already he was surrounded. A little stir at the entrance attracted his attention. He turned round and found Fergusson presenting him to a royal personage, who was graciously pleased, however, to remember a former meeting, and waved away the words of introduction.

It chanced, without any design on his part, that Berenice and he left almost at the same time, and met near the stage door. She dropped Fergusson's arm—he had left his guests to see her to her carriage—and motioned to Matravers.

"Won't you see me home?" she asked quietly. "I have sent my maid on, she was so tired, and I am all alone."

"I shall be very pleased," Matravers answered. "May I come in with you?"

Fergusson lingered for a moment or two at the carriage door, and then they drove off. Berenice, with a little sigh, leaned back among the cushions.

"You are very tired, I am afraid," he said. "The last few weeks must have been a terrible strain upon you."

"They have been in many ways," she said, "the happiest of my life."

"I am glad of that; yet it is quite time that you had a rest."

She did not answer him; she did not speak again until the carriage drew up before the house. He handed her out, and opened the door with the latchkey which she passed over to him.

"Good night," he said, holding out his hand.

"You must please come in for a little time," she begged. "I have seen you scarcely at all lately. You have not even told me about your travels."

He hesitated a moment; then, seeing

the shade upon her face, he stepped forward briskly.

"I should like to come very much," he said, "only you must be sure to send me away if I stay too long. You are tired already."

"I am tired," she admitted, leading the way upstairs, "only it will rest me much more to have you talk to me than to go to bed. Mine is scarcely a physical fatigue. My nerves are all quivering. I could not sleep. Tell me where you have been."

Matravers took the seat to which she motioned him, and obeyed her, watching while she stooped down over the fire and poured water into a brazen coffeepot, and took another cup and saucer from a quaint little cupboard. She made the coffee carefully and well, and Matravers, as he lit his cigarette, found himself wondering at this new and very natural note of domesticity in her.

All the time he was talking, telling her in a few chosen sentences of the little tour for which she really was responsible—of the pink-and-white apple blossoms of Brittany, of the peasants in their quaint and picturesque garb, and of the old, time-worn churches, the exploration of which had constituted his chief interest. She listened eagerly; every word of his description, so vivid and picturesque, was interesting. When he had finished, he looked at her thoughtfully.

"You, too," he said, "need a change. You have worked very hard, and you will need all your strength for the autumn season."

"I am going away," she said, "very soon. Perhaps to-morrow."

He looked at her surprised.

"So soon!"

"Why not? What is there to keep me? The theater is closed. London is positively stifling. I am longing for some fresh air."

He was silent for a moment or two. It was so natural that she should go, and yet in a sense it was so unexpected. Looking steadily across at her as she leaned back among the cushions of her chair, her dark eyes watching his face,

her attitude and expression alike convincing him in some subtle way of her satisfaction at his presence, he became suddenly conscious that the time which he had dimly anticipated with mingled fear and pleasure was now close at hand. His heart was beating with a quickened throb. He was aghast as he realized with quick, unerring truth the full effect of her words upon him.

He drew a sharp little breath and walked to the open window, taking in a long draft of the fresh night air, sweetly scented with the perfume of the flowers in her boxes. Her voice came to him low and sweet from the interior of the room.

"There is a little farmhouse in Devonshire which belongs to me. It is nothing but a tumble-down, gray-stone place; but there are hills, and meadows, and country lanes, and the sea. I want to go there."

"Away from me!" he cried hoarsely.

"Will you come, too?" she murmured.

He turned back into the room and looked at her. She was standing up, coming toward him; a faint tinge of pink color had stained her cheek, her bosom was heaving, her eyes were challenging his with a light which needed no borrowed brilliancy. Go with her! The man's birthright, his passion, which through the long days of his austere life had lain dormant and undreamed of, swept up from his heart. He held out his arms, and she came across the room to him with a sweet effort of self-yielding which yet waited for while it invited his embrace.

"You mean it?" he murmured.

"You are sure?"

She did not answer him. But indeed there was no need.

CHAPTER XII.

Matravers never altogether forgot the sensations with which he awoke on the following morning. Notwithstanding a sleepless night, he rose and made a deliberate toilet with a wonderful buoyancy of spirits. The change which had come into his life was a thing so wonderful that he could scarcely realize

it. Yet it was true! He had found the one experience in life which had hitherto been denied him, and he was amazed at the full extent of its power and sweetness.

He felt himself to be many years younger. Old dreams and enthusiasms were suddenly revived. Once more his foot seemed to be poised upon the threshold of life. After all, he had not yet reached middle age! He was surprised to find himself so young.

Marriage, although so far as regarded himself he had never imagined it a possible part of his life, was a condition against which he held no vows. Instinctively he felt that, with Berenice, existence must inevitably become a fuller and a richer thing. The old days of philosophic quietude, of self-contained and cultured ease, had been in themselves very pleasant, but his was altogether too large a nature to become in any way the slave of habit. He looked forward to their abandonment without regret. What was to come would be a continuation of the best part of them set to the sweetest music.

He was conscious of holding himself differently as he entered his breakfast room. Was it his fancy, or was the perfume of his little bowl of roses indeed more sweet this morning, the sunshine mellow and warmer, the flavor of his grapes more delicate? At any rate, he ate with a rare appetite, and then while he smoked a cigarette afterward, an idea came to him! The color rose in his cheeks; he felt like a boy.

In a few minutes he was walking through the streets, smiling softly to himself as he thought of his strange errand.

He found his way to a jeweler's shop in Bond Street, and asked for pearls. They were the only jewels she cared for, and he made a deliberate and careful choice, wondering more than once, with a curious sort of shyness, whether the man who served him so gravely had any idea for what purpose he was buying the ring which had been the object of his first inquiry.

He walked home with a little square box in his hand, and a much smaller one

in his waistcoat pocket. On the pavement he had hesitated for a moment, but a glance at his watch had decided him. It was too early to go and see her yet.

He walked back to his rooms. There was a little tremor of pleasure he recognized her handwriting. He took it over to the tall, sunny window, with a smile of anticipation upon his lips. He broke the seal and read:

On his desk a letter was waiting for him. With a little tremor of pleasure he recognized her handwriting. He took it over to the tall, sunny window, with a smile of anticipation upon his lips. He broke the seal and read:

My love, the daylight has come, and I am here where you left me, a very happy and yet a very unhappy woman! Is it indeed only a few hours since we parted? It all seems so different. The starlight and the night wind and the deep, sweet silence have gone. There is a great shaft of yellow light in the sky, and a bank of purple clouds where the sun has risen. Only the perfume of your roses, lying crushed in my lap, remains to prove to me that it has not all been a very sweet dream.

Dearest, I have a secret to tell you—the sorrow of my life. The time has come when you must, alas, know it. Last night it was enough for me to hear you tell me of your love! Nothing else in the world seemed worthy of a moment's thought. But as you were leaving, you whispered something about our marriage. How sweetly it sounded—and yet how bitterly. For, dear, I can never marry you. I am already married! I can see you start when you read this. You will blame me for having kept this secret from you. Very likely you will be angry with me. Only for the love of God pity me a little!

My story is so commonplace. I can tell it you in a few sentences. I married when I was seventeen at my father's command, to save him from ruin. My husband, like my father, was a City merchant. I did not love him, but then I did not know what love was.

My girlhood was a miserable one. My father belonged to the sect of Calvinists. Our home was hideous, and we were poor. Any release from it was welcome. John Drage, the man whom I married, had one good quality. He was generous. He bought me pictures and books—things which I always craved. When my father's command came, it did not seem a hardship. I married him. He was not so much a bad man, perhaps, as a weak one.

We lived together for four years. I had one child—a little boy. Then I made a horrible discovery. My husband, whom I knew to be a drunkard, was hideously, debasingly false to me.

There, I have told you. It would have hurt me less to have cut off my right hand. But there shall be no misunderstanding, nor any concealment between us. I left John Drage's house that night. I took little Freddy with me; but when I refused to return, he stole the child away from me. Then I drew a sharp line at that point in my life. I had neither friend nor relation, but there was some money which had been left me soon after my marriage. I lived alone, and I began to write. That is my story. That is why I cannot marry you.

Dear, I want you, now that you know my very ugly history, to consider this. While I was married, I was faithful to my husband; since then I have been faithful to my self-respect. But I have told myself always that if ever the time came when I should love, I would give myself to that man without hesitation and without shame. And that time has come, dear. You know that I love you! Your coming has been the great awakening joy of my life. Nothing that has gone before, nothing that the future may hold, can ever trouble me if we are together—you and I. I have suffered more than most women. But you will help me to forget it.

I sit here with my face to the morning, and I seem to see a new life stretching out before me. Is not love a beautiful thing? I am not ambitious any more. I do not want any other object in life than to make you happy, and to be made happy by you. I began this letter with a heavy heart and with trembling fingers. But now I am quite calm and quite happy. I know that you will come to me. You see I have great faith in your love. Thank God for it!

BERENICE.

The letter fluttered from Matravers' fingers onto the floor. For several minutes he stood quite still, with his hand pressed to his heart. Then he calmly seated himself in a little easy-chair which stood by his side, with its back to the window. He had a curious sense of being suddenly removed from his own personality—his own self. He was another man gazing for the last time upon a very familiar scene.

He sat there with his head resting upon the palm of his hand, looking with lingering eyes around his little room, even the simplest objects of which were in a sense typical of the life which he was abandoning. He knew that that life, even if its influence had not been wide, had been a studiously well-ordered and a seemly thing. A touch of that ultra-aestheticism, which had given to all his writings a peculiar tone and individuality, had permeated also his

ideas as to the simplest events of living. All that was commonplace and ugly and vicious had ever repelled him. He had lived not only a clean life, but a sweet one. His intense love for pure beauty, combined with a strong dash of epicureanism, had given a certain color to its outward form, as well as to its inward workings.

Even the simplest objects by which he was surrounded were the best of their kind, carefully and faithfully chosen. The smallest details of his daily life had always been governed by a love of comely and kindly order. Both in his conversation and in his writings he had studiously avoided all excesses, all shadow of evil or unkindness. His opinions, well chosen and deliberate though they were, were flavored with a delicate temperateness so distinctive of the man and of his habits.

And now, it was all to come to an end! He was about to sever the cords, to cut himself adrift from all that had seemed precious, and dear, and beautiful to him. He, to whom even the women of the streets had been as sacred things, was about to become the established and the open lover of a woman whom he could never marry. To a certain extent it was like moral shipwreck to him.

Yet he loved her! He was sure of that. He had called himself in the past, as indeed he had every right to, something of a philosopher; but he had never tried to harden within himself the human leaven which had kept him, in sympathy and kindness, always in close touch with his fellows. And this was its fruit! To him of all men there had come this.

Soon he found himself in the street, on his way to her. Such a letter as this called for no delay. It was barely twelve o'clock when he rang the bell at her house. The girl who answered it handed him a note. He asked quickly for her mistress.

She had left an hour ago by the early train, he was told. She had gone into the country. She had made up her mind quite suddenly, and had not even

taken her maid. The address would probably be in the letter.

Still standing on the doorstep, he tore open the note and read it. There were only a few lines.

Dearest, can you take a short holiday? I have a fancy to have you come to me at my little house in Devonshire. London is stifling me, and I want to taste the full sweetness of my happiness. You see I do not doubt you! I know that you will come. Shall you mind a tiresome railway journey? The address is Bossington Old Manor House, Devonshire, and the station is Minehead. Wire what train you are coming by, and I will send something to meet you.

BERENICE.

CHAPTER XIII.

Matravers walked back to his rooms and ordered his portmanteau to be packed. Then he went out, and after making all his arrangements for an absence from town, bought a Bradshaw. (There were two trains, he found, by which he could travel, one at three, the other at half past four. He arranged to catch the earlier one, and drove to his club for lunch. Afterward he strolled toward the smoking room, but finding it unusually full, was on the point of withdrawing. As he lingered on the threshold, a woman's name fell upon his ears. The speaker was Mr. Thorndyke. He became rigid.

"Why, yes, I gave her the victoria," he was saying. "We called it a birthday present, or something of that sort. I supposed every one knew about that. Those little arrangements generally are known somehow."

The innuendo was unmistakable. Matravers advanced with his usual leisurely walk to the little group of men.

"I beg your pardon," he said quietly. "I understood Mr. Thorndyke to say, I believe, that he had given a carriage to a certain lady. Am I correct?"

Thorndyke turned upon him sharply. There was a sudden silence in the crowded room. Matravers' clear, cold voice, although scarcely raised above the pitch of ordinary conversation, had penetrated to its farthest corner.

"And if I did, sir! What——"

"These gentlemen will bear me wit-

ness that you did say so," Matravers interrupted calmly. "I regret to have to use unpleasant language, Mr. Thorn-dyke, but I am compelled to tell you, and these gentlemen, that your state-ment is a lie!"

Thorndyke was a florid and a puffy man. The veins upon his temples stood out like whipcord. He was not a pleas-ant sight to look upon.

"What do you mean, sir?" he splut-tered. "The carriage was mine before she had it. Everybody recognizes it."

"Exactly. The carriage was yours. You intended every one to recognize it. But you have omitted to state, both here and in other places, that the lady bought that carriage from you for two hundred and sixty guineas—a good deal more than it's worth, I should im-agine. You heard her say that she was thinking of buying a victoria, and you offered her yours—pressed her to buy it. It was too small for your horses, you said, and you were hard up. You even had it sent round to her stables without her consent. I have heard this story before, sir, and I have furnished myself with proofs of its falsehood. This, gentlemen," he added, drawing some papers from his pocket, "is Mr. Thorndyke's receipt for the two hun-dred and sixty guineas for a victoria, signed, as you will see, in his own hand-writing, and here is the lady's check with Mr. Thorndyke's indorsement, canceled and paid."

The papers were handed round. Thorndyke picked up his hat, but Ma-travers barred his egress.

"With regard to the insinuation which you coupled with your falsehood," he continued, "both are equally and abso-lutely false. I know her to be a pure and upright woman. A short time ago you took advantage of your position to make certain cowardly and disgraceful propositions to her, since when her doors have been closed upon you. I would have you know, sir, and remem-ber, that the honor of that lady, whom last night I asked to be my wife, is as dear to me as my own, and if you dare now, or at any future time, to slander

her, I shall treat you as you deserve. You can go."

"And be very careful, sir," thundered the old Earl of Ellesmere, veteran mem-ber of the club, "that you never show your face inside these doors again, or, egad! I'm an old man, but I'll kick you out myself."

Thorndyke left the room amid a chilling and unsympathetic silence. As soon as he could get away, Matravers followed him. There was a strange pain at his heart; a sense of intolerable depression had settled down upon him. After all, what good had he done? Only a few more days and her name, which for the moment he had cleared, would be besmirched in earnest. His impeachment of Thorndyke would sound to these men then like mock heroics. There would be no one to de-fend her any more. There would be no defense. Forever, in the eyes of all these people, she was doomed to be-come one of the Magdalens of the world.

It seemed a very unreal London through which Matravers was whirled on his way from the club to Padding-ton. But before a third of the distance was accomplished there was a sudden check. A little boy, who had wandered from his nurse in crossing the road, narrowly escaped being run over by a carriage and pair, only to find himself knocked down by the shaft of Ma-travers' hansom. There was a cry, and the driver pulled his horse onto her haun-ches, but apparently just a second too late. With a sickening sense of horror, Matravers saw the little fellow literally under the horse's feet, and heard his shrill cry of terror.

He leaped out, and was the first to pick the child up, immeasurably re-lieved to find that after all he was not seriously hurt. His clothes were torn, and his hands were scratched, and there, apparently, the mischief ended. Ma-travers lifted him into the cab, and turned to the frightened nurse girl for the address.

"Nine, Greenfield Gardens, West Kensington, sir," she told him. "And

please tell the master it wasn't my fault. He is so venturesome, I can't control him nohow. His name is Drage—Freddy Drage, sir."

And then once more Matravers felt that strange dizziness which had come to him earlier in the day. Again he had that curious sense of moving in a dream, as though he had, indeed, become part of an unreal and shadowy world. The renewed motion of the cab, as they drove back again along Pall Mall, recalled him to himself. He leaned back and looked at the boy steadily.

Yes, they were her eyes. There was no doubt about it. The little fellow, not in the least shy, and, in fact, now become rather proud of his adventure, commenced to prattle very soon.

Matravers interrupted him with a question:

"Won't your mother be frightened to see you like this?"

The child stared at him with wide-open eyes.

"Why, mammy ain't there," he exclaimed. "Mammy went away ever so long ago. I don't think she's dead, though, 'cos daddy wouldn't let me talk about her, only just lately, since he was ill. You see," he went on, with an explanatory wave of the hand, "daddy's been a very bad man. He's better now—leastways, he ain't so bad as he was; but I 'spect that's why mammy went away. Don't you?"

"I dare say, Freddy," Matravers answered softly.

"We're getting very near now," Freddy remarked, looking over the apron of the cab. "My! Won't daddy be surprised to see me drive up in a cab with you! I hope he's at the window!"

"Will your father be at home now?" Matravers asked.

Freddy stared at him.

"Why, of course! Dad's always at home! Is my face very buggy? Don't rub it any more, please. That's Jack Mason over there. I play with him. I want him to see me. Hello! Jack!" he shouted, leaning out of the cab. "I've been run over—right over, face all buggy. Look at it! Hands, too," he

cried, spreading them out. "He's a nice boy," Freddy continued, as the cab turned a corner, "but he can't run near so fast as me, and he's lots older. Hello! Here we are!"—kicking vigorously at the apron.

Matravers looked up in surprise. They had stopped short before a long row of shabby-genteel houses in the outskirts of Kensington. He took the boy's outstretched hand and pushed open the gate. The door was open, and Freddy dragged him into a room on the ground floor.

A man was lying on a sofa before the window, wrapped in an untidy dressing gown, and with the lower part of his body covered up with a rug. His face, fair and florid, with more than a suggestion of coarseness in the heavy jaw and thick lips, was drawn and wrinkled as though with pain. His lips wore an habitually peevish expression. He did not offer to rise when they came in.

Matravers was thankful that Freddy spared him the necessity of immediate speech. He had recognized in a moment the man who had sat alone night after night in the back seats of the New Theater, whose slow, drawn-out cry of agony had so curiously affected him on that last night of her performance. He recognized, too, the undergraduate of his college sent down for flagrant misbehavior, the leader of a set whom he himself had denounced as a disgrace to the university. And this man was her husband!

"Daddy," the boy cried, dropping Matravers' hand and running over to the couch, "I've been run over by a hansom cab, and I'm all buggy, but I ain't hurt, and this gentleman brought me home. Daddy can't get up, you know," Freddy explained; "his legs is bad."

"Run over, eh!" exclaimed the man on the couch. "It's like that girl's carelessness."

He patted the boy's head, not unkindly, and Matravers found words.

"My cab unfortunately knocked your little boy down near Trafalgar Square, but I am thankful to say that he was not hurt. I thought that I had better

bring him straight home, though, as he has had a roll in the dust."

"At the sound of Matravers' voice, the man started and looked at him earnestly. A dull-red flush stained his cheeks. He looked away.

"It was very good of you, Mr. Matravers," he said. "I can't think what the girl could have been about."

"I did not see her until after the accident. I am glad that it was no worse," Matravers answered. "You have not forgotten me, then?"

John Drage shook his head.

"No, sir," he said. "I have not forgotten you. I should have known your voice anywhere. Besides, I knew that you were in London. I saw you at the New Theater."

There was a short silence. Matravers glanced around the room with an inward shiver. The usual horrors of a suburban parlor were augmented by a general slovenliness, and an obvious disregard for any sort of order.

"I am afraid, Drage," he said gently, "that things have not gone well with you."

"You are quite right," the man answered bitterly. "They have not! They have gone very wrong indeed; and I have no one to blame but myself."

"I am sorry," Matravers said. "You are an invalid, too, are you not?"

"I am worse than an invalid," the man on the couch groaned. "I am a prisoner on my back, most likely forever; curse it! I have had a paralytic stroke. I can't think why I couldn't die! It's hard lines!—damned hard lines! I wish I were dead twenty times a day! I am alone here from morning to night, and not a soul to speak to. If it wasn't for Freddy, I should jolly soon end it!"

"The little boy's mother?" Matravers ventured, with bowed head.

"She left me—years ago. I don't know that I blame her, particularly. Sit down, if you will, for a bit. I never have a visitor, and it does me good to talk."

Matravers took the only unoccupied chair, and drew it back a little into the darker part of the room.

"You remember me, then, Drage," he remarked. "Yet it is a long time since our college days."

"I knew you directly I heard your voice, sir," the man answered. "It seemed to take me back to a night many years ago—I want you to let me remind you of it. I should like you to know that I never forgot it. We were at St. John's then. You were right above me—in a different world altogether. You were a leader among the best of them, and I was a hanger-on among the worst. You were in with the gentlemen set and the reading set. Neither of them would have anything to do with me—and they were quite right. I was what they thought me—a cad. I'd no head for work, and no taste for anything worth doing, and I wasn't a gentleman, and hadn't the sense to behave like one. I'd no right to have been at the university at all, but my poor old dad would have me go. He had an idea that he could make a gentleman of me. It was a mistake!"

Matravers moved slightly in his chair; he was suffering tortures.

"Is it worth while recalling all these things?" he asked quietly. "Life cannot be a success for all of us; yet it is the future, and not the past."

"I have no future," the man interrupted doggedly; "no future here, or in any other place. I have got my deserts. I wanted to remind you of that night when you came to see me in my rooms, after I'd been sent down for being drunk. I suppose you were the first gentleman who had ever crossed my threshold, and I remember wondering what on earth you'd come for. You didn't lecture me, and you didn't preach. You came and sat down and smoked one of my cigars, and talked just as though we were friends, and tried to make me see what a fool I was. It didn't do much good in the end—but I never forgot it. You shook hands with me when you left, and for once in my life I was ashamed of myself."

"I am sorry," Matravers said, with an effort, "that I did not go to see you oftener."

Drage shook his head.

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"It was too late then! I was done for—done for as far as Oxford was concerned. But that was only the beginning. I might easily have picked up if I'd had the pluck. The dad forgave me, and made me a partner in the business before he died. I was a rich man, and I might have been a millionaire; instead of that I was a damned fool. I can't help swearing! You mustn't mind, sir! Remember what I am! I don't swear when Freddy's in the room, if I can help it. I went the pace—drink, and all the rest of it. My wife found me out and went away.

"I ain't saying a word against her. She was a good woman, and I was a bad man, and she left me. She was right enough! I wasn't fit for a decent woman to live with. All the same, I missed her; and it was another kick down hellward for me when she went. I got desperate then; I took to drink worse than ever, and I began to let my business go, and speculate. You wouldn't know anything of the City, sir; but I can tell you this—when a cool chap with all his wits about him starts speculating outside his business, it's touch and go with him; when a chap in the state I was in goes for it, you can spell the result in four letters! It's R U I N, ruin! That's what it meant for me. I lost two hundred thousand pounds in three years, and my business went to pot, too. Then I had this cursed stroke, and here I am! I may stick on for years, but I shall never be able to earn a penny again. Where Freddy's schooling is to come from, or how we are to live, I don't know!"

"I am very sorry," Matravers said gently. "Have you no friends, then, or relations who will help you?"

"Not a damned one," growled the man on the couch. "I had plenty of pals once, only too glad to count themselves John Drage's friends; but where they are now I don't know. They seem to have melted away. There's never a one comes near me. I could do without their money or their help, somehow, but it's damned hard to lie here forever and have not one of 'em drop in just now and then for a bit of a talk and a

cheering word. That's what gives me the blues. I always was fond of company; I hated being alone, and it's like hell to lie here day after day and see no one but a cross landlady and a miserable servant girl. Lately, I can't bear to be alone with Freddy. He's so like his mother, you know. It brings a lump in my throat. I wouldn't mind so much if it were only myself. I've had my cake! But it's rough on the boy!"

"It is rough on the boy, and it is rough on you," Matravers said kindly. "I wonder you have never thought of sending him to his mother. She would surely like to have him."

The man's face grew black.

"Not till I'm dead," he said doggedly. "I don't want him set against me. He's all I've got! I'm going to keep him for a bit. It ought not to be so difficult for us to live. If only I could get down to the City for a few hours!"

"Could not a friend there do some good for you?" Matravers asked.

"Of course he could," Mr. Drage answered eagerly; "but I haven't got a friend. See here!"

He took a little account book from under his pillow, and with trembling fingers thrust it before his visitor.

"You see all these amounts. They are all owing to me from those people—money lent, and one thing and another. There is an envelope with bills and I O Us. They belong to me, you understand," he said, with a sudden touch of dignity. "I never failed! My business had to be stopped when I was taken ill, but there was enough to pay everybody. Now some of these amounts have never been collected. If I could see these people myself, they would pay, or if I could get a friend whom I could trust. But there isn't a man comes near me!"

"I—am not a business man," Matravers said slowly; "but if you cared to explain things to me, I would go into the City and see what I could do."

The man raised himself on his elbow and gazed at his visitor open-mouthed.

"You mean this?" he cried thickly. "Say it again—quick! You mean it?"

"Certainly," Matravers answered. "I will do what I can."

John Drage did not doubt his good fortune for a moment. No one ever looked into Matravers' face and failed to believe him.

"I—I'll thank you some day," he murmured. "You've done me up! Will you—shake hands?"

He held out a thin white hand. Matravers took it between his own.

In a few moments they were absorbed in figures and explanations. Finally the little book was passed over to Matravers' keeping.

"I will see what I can do," he said quietly. "Some of these accounts should certainly be recovered. I will come down and let you know how I have got on."

"If you would! If you don't mind! And, I wonder—do you take a morning paper? If so, will you bring it when you've done with it, or an old one will do? I can't read anything but newspapers; and lately I haven't dared to spend a penny—because of Freddy, you know. It's so cursed lonely!"

"I will come, and I will bring you something to read," Matravers promised. "I must go now."

John Drage held out his hand wistfully.

"Good-by," he said. "You're a good man! I wish I'd been like you. It's an odd thing for me to say, but—God bless you, sir!"

Matravers stood on the doorstep with his watch in his hand. It was half past three. There was just time to catch the four thirty from Waterloo.

For a moment the little street faded away from before his eyes. He saw himself at his journey's end. Berenice was there to meet him. A breath of the country came to him on the breeze—a breath of sweet-smelling flowers, and fresh, moorland air, and the low murmur of the blue sea. Yes, there was Berenice, with her dark hair blowing in the wind, and that look of passionate peace in her pale, tired face! Her arms were open, wide open! She had been weary so long! The struggle

had been so hard! And he, too, was weary.

He started. He was still on the doorstep. Freddy was drumming on the pane, and behind, there was a man lying on the couch, with his face buried in his hands. He waved his hand and descended the steps firmly.

"Back to my rooms, No. 147 Piccadilly," he told the cabman. "I shall not be going away to-day."

CHAPTER XIV.

A man wrote it, from his little room in the center of London, while night faded into morning. He wrote it with leaden heart and unwilling, mechanical effort—wrote it as a man might write his own doom. Every fresh sentence, which stared up at him from the closely written sheets, seemed like another landmark in his sad descent from the pinnacles of his late wonderful happiness down into the black waters of despair. When he had finished, and the pen slipped from his stiff, nerveless fingers, there were lines and marks in his face which had never been there before, and which could never altogether pass away.

A woman read it, seated on a shelving slant of moorland with the blue sky overhead, and the soft murmur of the sea in her ears, and the sunlight streaming around her. When she had finished, and the letter had fallen to her side, crushed into a shapeless mass, the light had died out of the sky and the air, and the song of the birds had changed into a wail.

And this was what the man had said to the woman:

Berenice! I have had a dream! I dreamed that I was coming to you, that you and I were together somewhere in a new world, where the men were gods and the women were saints, where the sun always shone, and nothing that was not pure and beautiful had any place. And now I am awake, and I know that there is no such world.

You and I are standing on opposite sides of a deep, dark precipice. I may not come to you. You must not come to me.

I have thought over this matter with all the seriousness which befits it. You will never know how great and how fierce the struggle has been. I am feeling an older

and a tired man. But now that is all over! I have crossed the Rubicon! The mists have rolled away, and the truth is very clear indeed to me. I shudder when I think to what misery I might have brought you, if I had yielded to that sweetest and most fascinating impulse of my life, which bade me accept your sacrifice and come to you. Berenice, you are very young yet, and you have woven some new and very beautiful fancies which you have put into a book, and which the world has found amusing. To you alone they have become the essence of your life; they have become by constant contemplation a part of yourself. Out of the greatness of your heart you do not fear to put them into practice.

But, dear, you must find a new world to fit your fancies, for the one in which we are forced to dwell, the world which, in theory, finds them delightful, would find another and an uglier world if we should venture upon their embodiment. After all, we are creatures of this world, and by this world's laws we shall be judged. The things which are right are right, and the things which are pure are pure. Love is the greatest power in the world, but it cannot alter things which are unalterable.

Once when I was climbing with a friend of mine in the Engadine, we saw a white flower growing virtually out of a cleft in the rocks, high above our heads. My friend was a botanist, and he would have that flower. I lay on my back and watched him struggle to reach it, watched him often slipping backward, but gradually crawling nearer and nearer, until at last, breathless, with torn clothes and bleeding hands he grasped the tiny blossom, and held it out to me in triumph! Together we admired it ceaselessly as we retraced our steps. But as we left the high altitudes and descended into the valley, a change took place in the flower. Its petals drooped, its leaves shrank and faded. White became gray, the freshness which had been its chief beauty faded away with every step we took. My friend kept it, but he kept it with sorrow. It was no longer a beautiful flower.

Berenice, you are that flower! You are beautiful, and pure, and strong! You think that you are strong enough to live in the lowlands, but you are not. No love of mine, changeless and whole as it must ever be, could keep your soul from withering in the nether land of sin. For it would be sin! In these days when you are young, when the fires of your enthusiasm are newly kindled, and the wings of your imagination have not been shorn, you may say to yourself that it is not sin. You may say that love is the only true and sweet shrine before which we need keep our lives holy and pure, and that the time for regrets would never come.

Illusion! I, too, have tried to reason with myself in this manner. I have tried pas-

sionately, earnestly, feverishly. I have failed! I cannot! No one can! I know that to you I seem to be writing like a Philistine, like a man of a generation gone by. You have filled your little world with new ideals, you have lit it with the lamp of love, and it all seems very real and beautiful to you.

But some day, though the lamp may burn still as brightly as ever, a great white daylight will break in through the walls. You will see things that you have never seen before, and the light of that lamp will seem cold and dim and ghostly. Nothing, nothing can ever alter the fact that your husband lives, and that your little boy is growing up with a great void in his heart. Some day he will ask for his mother; even now he may be asking for her. Berenice, would he ever look with large, indulgent eyes upon that little world of yours? Alas!

I have read my letter over to myself, Berenice, and I fear that it must sound to you very commonplace, even perhaps cold. Yet, believe me when I tell you that I have passed through a very fire of suffering, and if I am calm now it is with the calm of an ineffable despair. In my life at Oxford, and later, here in London, women have never borne any share. Part of my scheme of living has been to regard them as something outside my little cycle, an influence great indeed, but one which had passed me by.

Yet I am now one of the world's great sufferers, one of those who have found at once their greatest joy linked with an unutterable despair. For I love you, Berenice! Never doubt it! Though I should never look upon your face again—which God in His mercy forbid—my love for you must be forever a part and the greatest part of my life! Always remember that, I pray you!

It seems strange to talk of one's plans with such a great, black cloud of sorrow filling the air. But the outward form of life does not change, even when the light has gone out and one's heart is broken. I have some work before me which I must finish; when it is over I shall go abroad. But that can wait. When you are back in London, send for me. I am schooling myself to meet a new Berenice—my friend! And I have something still more to say to you!

MATRAVERS.

CHAPTER XV.

The week that followed the sending of his letter was, to Matravvers, with his love for equable times and emotions, like a week in hell. He had set himself a task not easy even to an ordinary man of business, but to him trebly difficult and harassing. Day after day he spent in the City—a somewhat strange visitor there, with his grave, dignified

manner and studied fastidiousness of dress and deportment. He was unversed in the ways of the men with whom he had to deal, and he had no commercial aptitude whatever. But in a quiet way he was wonderfully persistent, and he succeeded better, perhaps, than any other emissary whom John Drage could have employed. The sum of money which he eventually collected amounted to nearly fifteen hundred pounds, and late one evening he started for Kensington with a bundle of papers under his arm and a check-book in his pocket.

It was his last visit—at any rate, for the present—he told himself with a sense of wonderful relief, as he walked through the park in the gathering twilight. For of late, something in connection with his day's efforts had taken him every evening to the shabby little house at Kensington, where his coming was eagerly welcomed by the tired, sick man and the lonely boy.

He had esteemed himself a man well schooled in all manner of self-control, and little to be influenced in a matter of duty by his personal likes and dislikes. But these visits were a torture to him. To sit and talk for hours with a man, peevish and commonplace, and with a curious lack of virility or self-reliance in his untoward circumstances, was trial enough to Matravers, who had been used to select his associates and associations with delicate and close care.

But to remember that this man had been, and indeed was, the husband of Berenice, was madness. It was this man, whom at the best he could only regard with a kindly and gentle contempt, who stood between him and such surprising happiness—this man and the boy with his pale, serious face and dark eyes. And the bitterness of fate—for he never realized that it would have been possible for him to have acted otherwise—had made him their benefactor.

Just as he was leaving the park he glanced up at the sound of a carriage passing him rapidly, and as he looked up he stood still. It seemed to him that life itself was standing still in his

veins. Berenice had been silent. There had come no word from her. But nothing so tragic, so horrible as this, had ever occurred to him! His heart had been full of black despair, and his days had been days of misery; but even the possibility of seeking for himself solace, by means not altogether worthy, had never dawned upon him. Nor had he dreamed it of her!

Yet the man who waved his hand from the box seat of the phaëton with a courtesy seemingly real, but, under the circumstances, brutally ironical, was Thorndyke, and the woman who sat by his side was Berenice!

The carriage passed on down the broad drive, and Matravers stood looking after it. Was it his fancy, or was that, indeed, a faint cry which came traveling through the dim light to his ears as he stood there under the trees—a figure turned to stone? A faint cry, or the wailing of a lost spirit?

A sudden dizziness came over him, and he sat down on one of the seats close at hand. There was a singing in his ears, and a pain at his heart. He sat there with half-closed eyes, battling with his weakness.

Presently he got up, and continued his journey. He found himself on the doorstep of the shabby little house, and mechanically he passed in and told the story of his day's efforts to the man who welcomed him so eagerly. With his pocketbook in his hand he successfully underwent a searching cross-examination, faithfully recording what one man had said and what another, their excuses and their protestations.

He made no mistakes, and his memory served him amply.

But when he had come to the end of the list, and had placed the check book in John Drage's fingers, he felt that he must get away. Even his stoical endurance had a measurable depth. But it was hard to escape from the man's most unwelcome gratitude. John Drage had not the tact to recognize in his benefactor the man to whom thanks are hateful.

"And I had no claim upon you whatever!" the sick man wound up, half

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breathless. "If you had cut me dead, after my Oxford disgrace, it would only have been exactly what I deserved. That's what makes it so odd—your doing all this for me. I can't understand it—I'm damned if I can!"

Matravers stood over him, a silent, unresponsive figure, seeking only to make his escape. With difficulty he broke in upon the torrent of words.

"Will you do me the favor, Mr. Drage," he begged earnestly, "of saying no more about it? Any man of leisure would have done for you what I have done. If you really wish to afford me a considerable happiness, you can do so."

"Anything in this world!" John Drage declared vehemently.

Matravers thought for a moment. The proposition which he was about to make had been in his mind from the very first. The time had come now to put it into words.

"You must not be offended at what I am going to say," he began gently. "I am a rich man, and I have taken a great fancy to your boy. I have no children of my own; in fact, I am quite alone in the world. If you will allow me, I should like to undertake Freddy's education."

A light broke across the man's coarse face, momentarily transfiguring it. He raised himself on his elbow, and gazed at his visitor with eager scrutiny. Then he drew a deep sigh, and there were tears in his eyes. He did not say a word. Matravers continued.

"It will be a great pleasure for me," he said quietly. "What I propose is to invest a thousand pounds for that purpose in Freddy's name. In fact, I have taken the liberty of already doing it. The papers are here."

Matravers laid an envelope on the little table between them. Then he rose up.

"Will you forgive me now," he said, "if I hurry away? I will come and see you again, and we will talk this over more thoroughly."

And still John Drage said nothing, but he held out his hand. Matravers

pressed the thin fingers between his own.

"You must see Freddy," Drage said eagerly. "I promised him that he should come in before you went."

But Matravers shook his head. There was a pain at his heart like the cutting of a knife.

"I cannot stay another instant," he declared. "Send Freddy over to my rooms any time. Let him come and have tea with me."

Then they parted, and Matravers walked through a world of strange shadows to Berenice's house. Her maid, recognizing him, took him up to her room without ceremony. The door was softly opened and shut. He stood upon the threshold. For a moment everything seemed dark before him.

CHAPTER XVI.

Berenice seemed to dwell always in the twilight. At first Matravers thought that the room was empty, and he advanced slowly toward the window. And then he stopped short. Berenice was lying in a crumpled heap on the low couch, almost within touch of his hands. She was lying on her side, her supple figure all doubled up, and the folds of her loose gown flowing around her in wild disorder. Her face was half hidden in her clasped hands.

"Berenice," he cried softly.

She did not answer. She was asleep. He stood looking down upon her, his heart full of an infinite tenderness. She, too, had suffered, then. Her hair was in wild confusion, and there were marks of recent tears upon her pale cheeks. A little lace handkerchief had slipped from her fingers down onto the floor. He picked it up. It was wet!

The glow of the heavily shaded lamp was upon her clasped white fingers and her bowed head. He watched the rising and falling of her bosom as she slept. To him, so great a stranger to women and their ways, there was a curious fascination in all the trifling details of her toilet and person, the innate daintiness of which appealed to him with a very potent and insidious sweetness.

While she slept, he felt as one far removed from her. It was like a beautiful picture upon which he was gazing. The passion which had been raging within him like an autumn storm was suddenly stilled. Only the purely æsthetic pleasure of her presence and his contemplation of it remained. It seemed to him then that he would have had her stay thus forever.

Before his fixed eyes there floated a sort of mystic dream. There was another world—was it the world of sleep, or of death?—where they might join hands and dwell together in beautiful places, and there was no one—not even their consciences—to say them nay. The dust of earthly passion and sin, and all the commonplace miseries of life, had faded forever from their knowledge. It was their souls which had come together, and there was a wonderful peace.

Then she opened her eyes and looked up at him. There was no more dreaming. The old, miserable passion flooded his heart and senses. His feet were upon the earth again. The whole world of those strange, poignant sensations, stronger because of their late coming, welled up within him.

"Berenice!"

"She was only half awake, and she held up her soft, white arms to him, gleaming like marble through the lace of her wide sleeves. She looked up at him with the faint smile of a child.

"My love!"

He stooped down, and her arms closed around him like a soft yoke. But he kissed her forehead so lightly that she scarcely realized that this was almost his first caress.

"Berenice, you have been angry with me!"

She sat up, and the lamplight fell upon his face.

"You have been ill," she cried in a shocked tone.

"It is nothing. I am well. But tonight—I had a shock; I saw you with—Mr. Thorndyke!"

Her eyes met his. The hideous phantom which had been dogging his steps

was slain. He was ashamed of that awful but nameless fear.

"It is true. Mr. Thorndyke has offered me an apology, which I am forced to believe sincere. He has asked me to be his wife. I was sorry for him."

"He is a bad man! He has spoken ill of you! He has already a wife!"

"I am glad of it. I can obey my instincts now, and see him no more. Personally he is distasteful to me. I had an idea he was honest. It is nothing."

She dismissed the subject with a wave of the hand. To her it was altogether a minor matter. Then she looked at him.

"Well?"

"You never answered my letter."

"No, there was no answer. I came back."

"You did not let me know."

"You will find a message at your rooms when you get back."

He walked up and down the room. He knew at once that all he had done hitherto had been in vain. The battle was still before him. She sat and watched him with an inscrutable smile. Once as he passed her, she laid her hand upon his arm. He stopped at once.

"Your white flower was born to die and wither," she said. "A night's frost would have killed it as surely as the lowland air. It is like these violets." She took a bunch from her bosom. "This morning they were fresh and beautiful. Now they are crushed and faded. Yet they have lived their life."

She threw them down upon the floor. "Do you think a woman is like that?" she said softly. "You are very, very ignorant! She has a soul."

He held out his hand.

"A soul to keep white, and pure. A soul to give back—to God!"

Again she smiled at him slowly, and shook her dark head.

"You are like a child in some things. You have lived so long among the dry bones of scholarship that you have lost your touch upon humanity. And of us women, you know—so very little. You have tried to understand us from books.

How foolish! You must be my disciple, and I will teach you."

"It is not teaching," he cried; "it is temptation."

She turned upon him with a gleam of passion in her eyes.

"Temptation!" she cried. "There spoke the whole selfishness of the philosopher, the dilettante in morals! What is it that you fear? I will tell you. It is the besmirchment of your own ideals, your own little code framed and molded with your own hands. What do you know of sin or of purity, you, who have held yourself aloof from the world with a sort of delicate care, as though you, forsooth, were too precious a thing to be soiled with the dust of human passion and human love? That is where you are all wrong. That is where you make your great mistake. You have judged without experience. You speak of a soul which may be stained with sin; you have no more knowledge than the Pharisees of old what constitutes sin. Love can never stain anything! Love that is constant and true and pure is above the marriage laws of men; it is above your little self-constructed ideals; it is a thing of heaven and of God! You wrote to me like a child—and you are a child, for until you have learned what love is, you are without understanding."

Suddenly her outstretched hands dropped to her side. Her voice became soft and low; her dark eyes were dimmed.

"Come to me, and you shall know. I will show you in what narrow paths you have been wandering. I will show you how beautiful a woman's love can make your life!"

"If we can love and be pure," he said hoarsely, "what is sin? What is that?"

He was standing by the window, and he pointed westward with shaking finger. The roar of Piccadilly and Regent Street came faintly into the little room. She understood him.

"You have a great deal to learn, dear," she whispered softly. "Remember this first, and before all: Love can sanctify everything."

"But they, too, loved in the beginning!"

She shook her head.

"That they never could have done. Love is eternal. If it fades or dies, then it never was love. Then it was sin."

"But those poor creatures! How are they to tell between the true love and the false?"

She stamped her foot, and a quiver of passion shook her frame.

"We are not talking about them! We are talking about ourselves! Do you doubt your love or mine?"

"I cannot," he answered. "Berenice!"

"Yes!"

"Did you ever tell—your husband that you loved him?"

"Never!"

"Did he love you?"

"I believe—so far as he knew how to love anything—he did."

"And now?"

She waved her hand impatiently.

"He has forgotten. He was shallow, and he was fond of life. He has found consolation long ago. Do not talk of him! Do not dare to speak of him again! Oh, why do you make me humble myself so?"

"He may not have forgotten. He may have repented. He may be longing for you now—and suffering. Should we be sinless, then?"

She swept from her place, and stood before him with flashing eyes.

"I forbid you to remind me of my shame. I forbid you to remind me that I, too, like those poor women on the street, have been bought and sold for money! I have worked out my own emancipation. I am free. It was while I was living with him as his wife that I sinned—for I hated him! Speak to me no more of that time! If you cannot forget it, you had better go!"

He stretched out his hands and held hers tightly.

"Berenice, if you were alone in the world, and there was some great barrier to our marriage, I would not hesitate any longer. I would take you to myself. Don't think too hardly of me. I am like a man who is denying himself

heaven. But your husband lives. You belong to him. You do not know whether he is in prosperity, or whether he has forgotten. You do not know whether he has repented, or whether his life is still such as to justify your taking the law into your own hands, and forsaking him forever. Listen to me, dear! If you will find out these things, if you can say to yourself and to me, and to your conscience: 'He has found happiness without me, he has ignored and forgotten the tie between us, he does not need my sympathy, or my care, or my companionship,' then I will have no more scruples. Only let us be sure that you are morally free from that man."

She wrenched her hands away from his. There was a bright, red spot of color flaring on her cheeks. Her eyes were on fire.

"You are mad!" she cried. "You do not love me! No man can know what love is who talks about doubts and scruples as you do! You are too cold and too selfish to realize what love can be! And to think that I have stooped to reason, to reason with you! Oh! my God! What have I done to be humbled like this?"

"Berenice!"

"Leave me! Don't come near me any more! I shall thrust you out of my life! You never loved me, I could not have loved you! Go away! It has been a hideous mistake!"

"Berenice!"

"My God! Will you leave me?" she moaned. "You are driving me mad! I hate you!"

Her white hand flashed out into the darkness, as though she would have struck him! He bowed his head and went.

CHAPTER XVII.

Matravers knew after that night that his was a broken life. Any future such as he had planned for himself of active, intellectual toil had now, he felt, become impossible. His ideals were all broken down. A woman had found her way in between the joints of an armor which he had grown to be-

lieve impenetrable, and henceforth life was a wreck. The old, quiet stoicism, which had been the inner stimulus of his career, was a thing altogether overthrown and impotent. He was too old to reconstruct life anew; the fragments were too many, and the wreck too complete. Only his philosophy showed him very plainly what the end must be. Across the sky of his vision it seemed to be written in letters of fire.

Early in the morning, having made his toilet as usual with a care almost fastidious, he went out into the sunlit streets, moving like a man in a deep dream among scenes which had become familiar to him day by day. At his lawyer's he made his will, and signed it, thankful for once for his great loneliness, inasmuch as there was no one who could call the disposal of his property to a stranger an injustice, for he had left all to little Freddy—left it to him because of his mother's eyes, as he thought with a faint smile. Then he called at his publisher's and at the office of a leading review to which he was a regular contributor, telling them to expect no more work from him for a while; he was going abroad to take a long-earned holiday.

He lunched at his club, speaking in a more than usually friendly manner to the few men with whom at times he had found it a pleasure to associate, and finally, with that sense of unreality growing stronger and stronger, he found himself once more in the park, in his usual chair, looking out with the same keen sympathy upon the intensely joyous, beautiful phase of life which floated around him.

The afternoon breeze rustled pleasantly among the cool green leaves above his head, and the sunlight slanted full across the shaded walk. On every hand were genial voices, cordial greetings, and light farewells. With a sense almost of awe, he thought of the days when he had sat there waiting for her carriage, that he might look for a few moments upon that pale-faced woman, whose influence over him seemed already to have commenced, before even any words had passed between them.

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He sat there, gravely acknowledging the salutes of those with whom he was acquainted, wearing always the same faint and impenetrable smile—wonderful mask of a broken heart.

And still the memories came surging into his brain. He thought of that gray morning when he had sat there alone, oppressed by some dim premonitions of the tragedy among whose shadows he was already passing, so that even the wind which had followed the dawn, and shaken the raindrops down upon him, had seemed to carry upon its bosom wailing cries and sad, human voices. As the slow moments passed along, he found himself watching for her carriage with some remnant of the old wistfulness. But it never came, and for that he was thankful.

At last he rose, and walked leisurely back to his rooms. He gave orders to his servant to pack all his things for a journey; then, for the last time, he stood up in the midst of his possessions, looking around him with a vague sorrowfulness at the little familiar objects which had become dear to him, both by association and by reason of a certain sense of companionship which he had always been able to feel for beautiful things, however inanimate.

It was here that he had come when he had first left Oxford, full of certain definite ambitions, and with a mind fixed at least upon living a serene and well-ordered life. He had woven many dreams within these four walls. How far away those days now seemed to be from him! He would never dream any more; for him the world's great dream was very close at hand.

He poured himself out a glass of wine from a quaintly cut decanter, and set it down on his writing desk, emptying into it with scrupulous care the contents of a little packet which he had been carrying all day in his waistcoat pocket.

He paused for a moment before taking up his pen, to move a little on one side the deep-blue china bowl of flowers which, summer and winter alike, stood always fresh upon his writing table. To-day it chanced, by some irony of fate, that they were roses, and a swi^t

flood of memories rushed into his tingling senses as the perfume of the creamy blossoms floated up to him.

He set his teeth, and, taking out some paper, began to write.

Berenice, farewell! To-night I am going on a very long journey, to a very far land. You and I may never meet again, and so, farewell! Farewell to you, Berenice, whom I have loved, and whom I dearly love. You are the only woman who has ever wandered into my little life to teach me the great depths of human passion—and you came too late. But that was not your fault.

For what I am doing, do you, at least, not blame me. If there were a single person in the world dependent upon me, or to whom my death would be a real loss, I would remain. But there is no one. And, whereas alive I can do you no good, dead I may! Berenice, your husband lives—in suffering and in poverty; your husband and your little boy. Freddy has looked at me out of your dark eyes, my love, and while I live I can never forget it. I hold his little hands, and I look into his pure, childish face, and the great love which I bear for his mother seems like an unholy thing. Leave your husband out of the question—put every other consideration on one side, Freddy's eyes must have kept us apart forever.

And, dear, it is your boy's future, and the care of your stricken husband, which must bring you into closer and more intimate touch with the vast world of human sorrows. Love is a sacrifice, and life is a sacrifice. I know—and that knowledge is the comfort of my last sad night on earth—that you will find your rightful place among her toiling daughters. And it is because there is no fitting place for me by your side that I am very well content to die. For myself, I have well counted the cost. Death is an infinite compulsion. Our little lives are but the veriest trifle in the scale of eternity. Whether we go into everlasting sleep, or into some other mystic state, a few short years here more or less are no great matter, Berenice.

Again there came that curious pain at his heartstrings, and the singing in his ears. The pen slipped from his fingers; his head drooped.

"Berenice!" he whispered. "Berenice!"

And, as though by a miracle, she heard him, for she was close at hand. While he had been writing, the door had been softly opened and closed, a tall, gray-mantled figure stood upon the threshold. It was Berenice!

"May I come in?" she cried softly. Her face was flushed, and her cheeks were wet, but a smile was quivering upon her lips.

He started slightly, but did not answer. She came into the room, close to his side. Her fingers clasped the hand which was hanging over the side of his chair. The lamp had burned very low; she could scarcely see his face.

"Dear, I have come to you," she murmured. "I am sorry. I want you to forgive me. I do love you! You know that I love you!"

The pressure of her fingers upon his hand was surely returned. She stood up, and her cloak slipped from her shoulders onto the floor.

"Why don't you speak to me? Don't you hear? Don't you understand? I have come to you! I will not be sent away! Is it too late? My carriage brought me here. I have told my people that I shall not be returning! Come away with me to-night! Let us start now! Listen! It is too late to draw back! Every one knows that I have come to you! We shall be so happy! Tell me that you are glad!"

There was no answer. He did not move. She came close to him, so that her cheek almost touched his.

"Tell me that you are glad," she begged. "Don't argue with me any more. If you do, I shall stop your mouth with kisses. I am not like you, dear! I must have love! I cannot live alone any longer! I have touched the utmost limits of my endurance! I *will* stay with you! You *shall* love me!

Listen! If you do not, I swear—but no! You will save me from that! Oh, I know that you will! But don't argue with me! Words are so cold, and I am a woman—and I must love and be loved—or I shall die— Ah!"

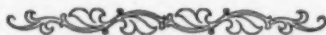
She started round with a little scream. Her eyes, frightened and dilated, were fixed upon the door. On the threshold a little boy was standing in his nightshirt, looking at her with dark, inquiring eyes.

"I want Mr. Matravers, if you please," he said deliberately. "Will you tell him? He don't know that I'm here yet! He will be so surprised! Daddy's gone away. He's dead, they say. What's dead mean? And nurse brought me here, but Mr. Matravers was out when we came, and nurse put me to bed. Now she's gone away, and I'm so lonely. Daddy's dead!"

She turned up the lamp without moving her eyes from the little, white-clad figure. A great trembling was upon her! It was like a voice from the shadows of another world. Like a flash she understood it all. This was her child, her own child, and its father, her husband, was dead. She was free!

Through a mist of sudden tears, she looked down into her boy's face. She fell on her knees, and with a little burst of passionate sobs took him into her arms.

At last she released the bewildered boy and rose, facing Matravers. He was standing, his arms outstretched toward her, and the old, faint smile parting his lips.



"JENNY KISSED ME"

JENNY kissed me when we met,
 Jumping from the chair she sat in;
 Time, you thief, who love to get
 Sweets into your list, put that in!
 Say I'm weary; say I'm sad;
 Say that Leath and wealth have missed me;
 Say I'm growing old, but add,
 Jenny kissed me.

Leigh Hunt.



Short Cuts to Favor

The way of woman's will is hard to find,
Harder to hit.

YET there is some clew to their mystery, some determining cause; for we find that the same men are universal favorites with women, as others are universally disliked by them. Is not the loadstone that attracts so powerfully, and in all circumstances, a strong and undisguised bias toward them, a marked attention, a conscious preference of them to any other passing object or topic?—*William Haslitt.*

A CLEVER, ugly man every now and then is successful with the ladies; but a handsome fool is irresistible.—*William Makepeace Thackeray.*

WOMEN like to perceive fastidiousness in men, and this is, it seems to me, the most vulnerable point whereby to gain them.—*Pascal.*

THE earth is like a woman. She requires you to be neither timid nor brutal.—*Anatole France.*

STUPIDITY is no disadvantage with women: indeed it is more likely that superior intellectual power, and especially genius, as being an abnormal trait, may make an unfavorable impression on them. Hence we often see an ugly, stupid, and coarse man preferred by women to a refined, clever, and amiable man.—*Arthur Schopenhauer.*

by
William J. Locke

Author of

*The Morals of
Marcus Ordeyne*



The
Heart at Twenty

THE girl stood at the end of the little stone jetty, her hair and the ends of her cheap fur boa and her skirts all fluttering behind her in the stiff northeast gale. Why any one should choose to stand on a jetty on a raw December afternoon with the wind in one's teeth was a sufficient problem for a comfort-loving elderly man like myself, and I pondered over it as I descended the slope leading from the village to the sea. It was nothing, thought I, but youth's animal delight in physical things. A few steps brought me in view of her face in half profile, and I saw that she did not notice wind or spray, but was staring out to sea with an intolerable wistfulness. A quick turn in the path made me lose the profile. I cursed the road that ran along the shore, and walked rapidly along the jetty. Arriving within hailing distance I called her.

"Viviette!"

She pivoted round like a weathercock in a gust, and with a sharp cry leaped forward to meet me. Her face was aflame with a great hope and joy. I have seen to my gladness that ex-

pression once before worn by a woman. As soon as she recognized me, however, the joy vanished, killed outright.

"Oh, it's you," she said, with a quivering lip.

"I am sorry, my dear," said I, taking her hand. "I can't help it. I wish from my heart I were somebody else."

She burst into tears. I put my arm around her and drew her to me, and patted her, and said, "There, there!" in the blundering masculine way. Having helped to bring her into the world twenty years before, I could claim fatherly privileges.

"Oh, doctor," she sobbed, dabbing her pretty young eyes with a handkerchief, "do forgive me. Of course I am glad to see you. It was the shock. I thought you were a ghost. No one ever comes to Ravetot."

"Never?" I asked mildly.

The tears flowed afresh. I leaned against the parapet of the jetty for comfort's sake, and looked around me. Ravetot-sur-Mer was not the place to attract visitors in December. A shingle beach with a few fishing boats hauled out of reach of the surf; a miniature

casino, like an impudently large summerhouse, shuttered-up, weather-beaten, and desolate; a weather-beaten, desolate and shuttered-up Hotel de l'Univers, and a perky deserted villa or two, on the embankment; a cliff behind them, topped by a little gray church; the road that led up the gorge closing itself in the turn—and that was all that was visible of Ravetot-sur-Mer. A projecting cliff bounded the bay at each side, and in front seethed the gray, angry Channel.

It was an Aceldama of a spot in winter, and only a matter of peculiar urgency had brought me thither. Viviette and her decrepit rascal of a father were tied to Ravetot by sheer poverty. He owned a pretty villa half a mile inland, and the rent he obtained for it during the summer months enabled them to live in some miraculous way the rest of the year.

They, the curé, and the fisher folk were the sole winter inhabitants of the place. The nearest doctor lived at Illerville, twenty kilometers away, and there was not even an educated farmer in the neighborhood. Yet I could not help thinking that my little friend's last remark was somewhat disingenuous.

"Are you quite sure, my dear," I said, "that no one ever comes to Ravetot?"

"Has father told you?" she asked tonelessly.

"No. I guessed it. I have extraordinary powers of divination. And the somebody has been making my little girl miserable."

"He has broken my heart," said Viviette.

I pulled the collar of my fur-lined coat above my ears which the northeast wind was biting. Being elderly and heart-whole I am sensitive to cold. I proposed that we should walk up and down the jetty while she told me her troubles, and I hooked her arm in mine.

"Who was *he*?" I asked. "And what was he doing here?"

"Oh, doctor, what does it matter?" she answered tearfully. "I never want to see him again."

"Don't fib," said I. "If the

confounded blackguard were here now——"

"But he isn't a blackguard!" she flashed. "If he were, I shouldn't be so miserable. I should forget him. He is good and kind and noble and everything that is right. I couldn't have expected him to act otherwise—it was awful, horrible—and when you called me by name I thought it was he."

"And the contradictory feminine did very much want to see him," said I.

"I suppose so," she confessed.

I looked down at the pretty face and saw that it was wan and pinched.

"You have been eating little and sleeping less. For how long?" I demanded sternly.

"For a week," she said pitifully.

"We must change all that. This abominable hole is a kind of cold storage for depression."

She drew my arm tighter. She had always been an affectionate little girl, and now she seemed to crave human sympathy and companionship.

"I don't mind it now. It doesn't in the least matter where I am. Before he came I used to hate Ravetot, and long for the gayety and brightness of the great world. I used to stand here for hours and just long and long for something to happen to take us away; and it seemed no good. Here I was for the rest of time—with nothing to do day after day but housework and sewing and reading, while father sat by the fire, with his little roulette machine and Monte Carlo averages and paper and pencil, working out the wonderful system that is going to make our fortune. We'll never have enough money to go to Monte Carlo for him to try it, so that is some comfort. One would have thought he had had enough of gambling."

She made the allusion, very simply, to me—an old friend. Her father had gambled away a fortune, and in desperation had forged another man's name on the back of a bill, for which he had suffered a term of imprisonment. His relatives had cast him out. That was why he lived in poverty-stricken seclusion at Ravetot-sur-Mer.

He was not an estimable old man, and I had always pitied Viviette for being so parented. Her mother had died years ago. I thought I would avoid the painful topic.

"And so," said I, after we had gone the length of the jetty in silence and had turned again, "one day when the lonely little princess was staring out to sea and longing for she knew not what, the young prince out of the fairy tale came riding up behind her, and stayed just long enough to make her lose her heart, and then rode off again."

"Something like it—only worse," she murmured. And then, with a sudden break in her voice: "I will tell you all about it. I shall go mad if I don't. I haven't a soul in the world to speak to. Yes, he came. He found me standing at the end of the jetty. He asked his way in French to the cemetery, and I recognized from his accent that he was English like myself. I asked him why he wanted to go to the cemetery. He said that it was to see his wife's grave."

The only Englishwoman buried here was a Mrs. Everest who was drowned last summer. This was the husband. He explained that he was in the Indian Civil Service, and was now on furlough. Being in Paris he thought he would like to come to Ravetot, where he could have quiet, in order to write a book."

"I understood it was to see his wife's grave," I remarked.

"He wanted to do that as well. You see, they had been separated for some years—judicially separated. She was not a nice woman. He didn't tell me so; he was too chivalrous a gentleman. But I had heard about her from the gossip of the place. I walked with him to the cemetery. I know a well-brought-up girl wouldn't have gone off like that with a stranger."

"My dear," said I, "in Ravetot-sur-Mer she would have gone off with a hippogriffin."

She pressed my arm. "How understanding you are, doctor, dear."

"I have an inkling of the laws that govern humanity," I replied ironically,

yet secretly flattered by my young lady's tribute. "Well, and after the pleasant trip to the cemetery?"

"He asked me whether the café at the top of the hill was really the only place to stay at in Ravetot. It's dreadful, you know—no one goes there but fishermen and farm laborers—and it is the only place. The hotel is shut up out of the season. I said that Ravetot didn't encourage visitors during the winter. He looked disappointed and said that he would have to find quiet somewhere else. Then he asked whether there wasn't any house that would take him in as a boarder."

She paused.

"Well?" I inquired.

"Oh, doctor, he seemed so strong and kind, and his eyes were so frank, and I knew he was everything that a man ought to be. We were friends at once, and I hated the thought of losing him. It is not gay at Ravetot with only Jeanne to talk to from week's end to week's end. And then we are so poor—and you know we do take in paying guests when we can get them."

"I understand perfectly," said I.

She nodded. "That was how it all happened. Would a nice girl have done such a thing?"

I replied that if she knew as much of the ways of nice girls as I did, she would be astounded. She smiled wanly and went on with her artless story.

Of course Mr. Everest jumped at the suggestion. It is not given to every young and unlamenting widower to be housed beneath the same roof as so delicious a young woman as Viviette. He brought his luggage and took possession of the best spare room in the villa, while Viviette and old, slatternly Jeanne, the *bonne à tout faire*, went about with agitated minds and busy hands attending to his comforts.

Old Widdrington, however, in his morose chimney corner, did not welcome the visitor. He growled and grumbled, and rated his daughter for not having doubled the terms. Didn't she know they wanted every penny they could get? Something was wrong with his roulette machine which ought

to be sent to Paris for repairs. Where was the money to come from? Viviette's father is the most unscrupulous, selfish old curmudgeon of my acquaintance.

Then, according to my young lady's incoherent and parenthetic narrative, followed idyllic days. Viviette chattered to Mr. Everest in the morning, walked with him in the afternoon, pretended to play the piano to him in the evening, and in between times sat with him at meals.

The inevitable happened. She had met no one like him before. He represented the strength and the music of the great world. He flashed upon her as the revelation of the vague visions that had floated before her eyes when she started seaward in the driving wind.

That the man was a bit in love with her seems certain. I think that one day, when a wayside byre was sheltering them from the rain, he must have kissed her. A young girl's confidences are full of details; but the important ones are generally left out. They can be divined, however, by the old and experienced. At any rate, Viviette was radiantly happy, and Everest appeared contented to stay indefinitely at Ravetot and watch her happiness.

Thus far the story was ordinary enough. Given the circumstances, it would have been extraordinary if my poor little Viviette had not fallen in love with the man and if the man's heart had not been touched. In his position, thrown with Viviette for nearly three weeks, noon and night, I, venerable philosopher that I am, would have made a doting idiot of myself.

If Everest had found the girl's feelings too deep for his response and had precipitately bolted with a confused sense of acting honorably toward her, the story would also have been commonplace. The cause of his sudden riding away was peculiarly painful. Somehow I cannot blame him; and yet I am vain enough to imagine that I should have acted otherwise.

One morning Everest asked her if Jeanne might search his bedroom for a

twenty-franc piece which he must have dropped on the floor. In the afternoon her father gave her twenty francs to get a postal order; he was sending to Paris for some fresh mechanism for his precious roulette wheel.

Everest accompanied her to the little post office. They walked arm in arm through the village like an affianced couple, and I fancy he must have said tenderer things than usual on the way, for at this stage of the story she wept.

When she paid the *louis* on the slab below the *guichet*, she noticed that it was a new Spanish coin. Spanish gold is rare. She showed it to Everest, and meeting his eyes read in them a curious questioning. The money-order obtained, they continued their walk happily, and Viviette forgot the incident.

Some days passed. Everest grew troubled and preoccupied. One live-long day he avoided her society altogether. She lived through it in a distressed wonder, and cried herself to sleep that night. How had she offended?

The next morning he gravely announced his departure. Urgent affairs summoned him to Paris. In dazed misery she accepted the payment of his account and wrote him a receipt. His face was set like a mask, and he looked at her out of cold, stern eyes which frightened her. In a timid way she asked him if he were going without one kind word.

"There are times, Miss Widdrington," said he, "when no word at all is the kindest."

"But what have I done?" she cried.

"Nothing at all but what is good and right. You may think whatever you like of me. Good-by."

He grasped his Gladstone bag, and through the window she saw him give it to the fisher lad who was to carry it three miles to the nearest wayside station. He disappeared through the gate, and so out of her life.

Fat, slatternly Jeanne came upon her a few moments later moaning her heart out, and administered comfort. It was very hard for mademoiselle, but what could mademoiselle expect? Monsieur

Everest could not stay any longer in the house. Naturally. Of course monsieur was a little touched in the brain, with his eternal calculations—he was not responsible for his actions. Still Monsieur Everest did not like monsieur to take money out of his room. But, Great God of Pity! Did not mademoiselle know that was the reason of Monsieur Everest going away?

"It was father who had stolen the Spanish louis," cried Viviette in a passion of tears, as we leaned once more against the parapet of the jetty. "He stole a fifty-franc note. He was caught red-handed by Mr. Everest rifling his dispatch box. Jeanne overheard them talking. It is horrible, horrible! How he must despise me! I feel wrapped in flames when I think of it—and I love him so—and I haven't slept for a week—and my heart is broken!"

I could do little to soothe this paroxysm save let it spend itself against my greatcoat while I again put my arm around her. The gray tide was leaping in and the fine spray dashed in my face. The early twilight began to settle over Ravetot, which appeared more desolate than ever.

"Never mind, my dear," said I. "You are young, and as your soul is sweet and clean you will get over this."

"Never," she moaned.

"You will leave Ravetot-sur-Mer and all its associations, and the brightness of life will drive all the old shadows away!"

"No. It is impossible. My heart is broken, and I only want to stay here at the end of the jetty until I die!"

"I shall die, anyhow," I remarked, with a shiver, "if I stay here much longer, and I don't want to. Let us go home."

She assented, and we walked away

from the sea and struck the gloomy inland road. Then I said, somewhat meaningly:

"Haven't you the curiosity to inquire why I left my comfortable house in London to come to this god-forsaken hole?"

"Why did you, doctor, dear?" she asked listlessly.

"To inform you that your cross old Aunt Caroline is dead, that she has left you three thousand pounds a year under my trusteeship till you are five and twenty, and that I am going to carry off the rich and beautiful Miss Viviette Widdrington to England to-morrow."

She stood still, looking at me open-mouthed.

"Is it true?" she gasped.

"Of course," said I.

Her face was transfigured with a sudden radiance. Amazement, rapture, youth—the pulsating wonder of her twenty years—danced in her eyes. In her excitement she pulled me by the lapels of my coat.

"Doctor! Doctor! Three thousand pounds a year! England! London! Men and women! Everything I've longed for! All the glad and beautiful things of life!"

"Yes, my dear."

She took my hands and swung them backward and forward.

"It's heaven! Delicious heaven!" she cried.

"But what about the broken heart?" I said maliciously.

She dropped my hands, sighed, and her face suddenly assumed an expression of portentous misery.

"I was forgetting. What does anything matter now? I shall never get over it. My heart is broken!"

"The devil a bit, my dear," said I



WOMEN often fancy themselves in love even when they are not. The occupation of an intrigue, the emotion of mind which gallantry produces, the natural leaning to the pleasure of being loved, and the pain of refusing, persuade them that they feel the passion of love, when, in reality, they feel nothing but coquetry.

—*La Rochefoucauld.*

by
E. W. Hornung

Author of
The Amateur Crackman



and
'Stingaree'

The Voice of the Charmer

OLD Duggan and Charlie Shand had been mates for years, in hut and tent, on foot and horseback, as overseer and storekeeper at the same Queensland station, but latterly as partners on a place of their own in the Lachlan back blocks. Duggan was the better bushman. Charlie Shand had brought in most of the capital. Charlie managed the business, Duggan the sheep and the men, and neither trenched upon the other's province. The partnership might have been made in heaven, and seemed in no danger of being marred on earth; in four years there had been hardly a hot word or a black look between them. Then they had a really good season and Charlie went home to England for a spell.

Old Duggan, who really was not at all old, saw him off with longing eyes, after vowing that nothing would induce him to go home himself, though he also hailed from lesser Britain. If he lied, he was rewarded for his unselfishness. It rained that summer as he had never seen it rain before; and one good season on top of another is a

Pelion of pure gold on a merely auriferous Ossa. Duggan saw sovereigns pouring from the sky, and more sovereigns growing where things were not even supposed to grow. Every scrap of normal desert was swallowed by a rank oasis in which sheep could not travel until the jungle of grass had been beaten down in front of them.

Duggan stocked every acre, yet counted the months at first, and then the days, that must elapse before Charlie Shand's return. Charlie's communications he could have counted on the fingers of one hand; but at last came a cable of two welcome words, and some weeks later a long telegram from Melbourne. This telegram began in the first person plural, and ended with the hour at which Mr. and Mrs. Charles Shand expected to arrive by the coach and hoped to find the shanghai at the township to meet them.

Duggan had to steady himself with a stiffish nobbler. It was the very first that he had heard of the interloping lady. He could only suppose that Charlie had been bewitched on the voyage and married off the reel on landing.

Some such marriages turned out a huge success. Charlie was no fool, either; he knew his own mind better than most, wanted only what was worth having, and saw that he got it nearly every time. He would make no mistake in a big thing like this; trust old Charlie to have done a good stroke for himself and for the station. A woman would be the making of the whole place; they had always said so. Still, it was rather a sudden end to old times, rather like rushing the more civilized existence of their common dream. It would have kept a bit longer, Duggan thought on the veranda, where they had threshed out everything of old. And on the last night of his loneliness he felt really lonely for the first time.

But he rose like a bird to the last day; every minute of it went in final preparations for the happy pair. There was much to be made as shipshape and as snug as possible; sprays of scrub to be stuck about the place by way of flowers; a native turkey to be shot for the evening banquet; champagne to be raised from a next-door neighbor fifteen miles away; furniture to furbish, including a grand piano of great antiquity; and then the bridal quarters to prepare as well as Duggan himself could prepare them in the time. This entailed his own migration to the bachelors' barracks of which they had never as yet made any use. They had run the place between them, those two, without the aid of any of those young gentlemen who hang about most homesteads, and are not worth their parlor rations. It might be as well to import one now, since four was at any rate better company than three. Yet there was no knowing; there were women and women, and Charlie was the very man to pick one in ten thousand. Charlie's friend grew more and more sanguine as the busy day wore on.

He had not time to drive five miles to meet them, even if he had been quite sure it was the tactful thing to do. One of the men went in the shanghai, while Duggan had his hair cut by the Chinaman, trimmed his own beard, and arrayed himself in a snowy suit hastily

washed and ironed for the great occasion. It was dark when he stepped down from the veranda, shouting welcomes; but though it was dark, and also dinner time, Duggan saw enough of the bride to require a nobbler with Charlie before they all met properly at the table.

"How long have we been married?" said that sinner, as they touched glasses. "I feel as if it were all my life! So will you, when your time comes, my son; everybody does, if they pick a winner."

"But how long, really?"

"Oh, a few weeks before we sailed."

"Then why on earth didn't you write and tell me?"

Duggan was clearly holding himself in; his voice trembled as it was; but Charlie Shand had his answer pat.

"My dear old Harry, I'd have sent a ten-pound cable rather than hurt your feelings; but, as a matter of fact, we thought we'd spare them. You see, you might have been in the devil's own funk all this time, wondering what she'd be like. You might have imagined she'd go and spoil everything; and now you can see for yourself at a glance that it'll be just the other way about. She's a topper, Harry! It was partly her idea—not to make you anxious."

"I see."

"You're not sick with us?"

"Of course I'm not."

"You never will be, either. I feel twice the chap I ever was, and she's — Well, wait till you know her! You wait, old son. I'll give you a week to get to know her; then you won't need me to tell you that she's just about the greatest girl God ever made!"

She was, perhaps, not quite, *quite* a girl at all; otherwise even Duggan could not have caviled at a word the happy idiot had said about his wife. She was a superb woman, as long as she was not too good for the bush. That was the only criticism a stranger might have formulated at the beginning of dinner; by the end, he would probably have seen that she was really too good to be too good for any mere spot on earth. She talked capitally, and all the time to Duggan, to her groom's intense delight.

What was even more delightful, and certainly more surprising, was the way old Duggan chattered in his turn, on newspaper topics which he would simply never have mentioned in the old bachelor days. His solitude seemed to have done him good; it, at any rate, had driven him deep into his *Australian*, and the affairs of the outside world. Men do not really get to know each other by living alone together. It takes a woman to hold them up to one another. Charlie had always known his friend for a great gentleman; but he had never suspected that behind that bearded piece of mahogany there resided a society man as well. He felt deliciously out of it at the festal board. The other two talked away as if they had known each other all their lives. And Charlie only gloated over this final seal on his incredible bliss.

His turn came on the dear old veranda, where he and Duggan had spent so many peaceful evenings in the past; this was worth them all put together, from Charlie's point of view. To him it was a new veranda with a new world of stars outside. He began to babble; the others now seemed glad to listen.

Mabel—for that was her dear name—found piquant enjoyment with a cigarette that showed the tip of her neat nose every few seconds; the men had prime cigars imported by the smuggler Shand. He was rather too full of their merits and his cunning; but there was so much that even he could not say before them both. At last he gave himself an opportunity; she must sing to them to round the evening off. No voice? What about the farewell concert on the ship! Piano out of tune? Well, Mab wouldn't be; they'd never notice the piano when she got going.

"I've hardly ever been in the room since you went away. I shouldn't wonder if some of the strings had perished," said Duggan, still backing up the bride.

Charlie was inclined to be unreasonable. A lamp was carried into the room behind them, where the poor old Broadwood was found primed with French

polish, to aggravate its other infirmities. Deft fingers took a hasty trial trip over the neglected keys, while my lord and master stole back in triumph to unresponsive Duggan and his angry cigar.

"Isn't she a topper?" he whispered. "But you wait till you hear her sing!"

And dour old Duggan waited without a word.

"What shall it be?" came from within in reckless tone.

"Anything you like, darling. You can't go wrong. Have you any favorites, Harry?"

"No."

"You used to have, whenever I gave tongue, you old scoundrel!"

"I'm sure I should appreciate anything that Mrs. Shand chose to give us."

Something in his old friend's tone—something new and not friendly—made Charlie look down sharply. Duggan was seated on the edge of the back veranda, his feet in the heavy sand that had drifted like snow on that side of the house, his eyes on the jet and jewels of trees and stars. Yet up he jumped at the first bar of the bride's first song.

Her groom was more than pacified. His proud eyes followed stealthy Duggan to the lighted room, and left him a silhouetted statue on the threshold.

"As the flight of a river
That flows to the sea,
My heart rushes ever
In tumult to thee!
A twofold existence
I have where thou art—
My heart in the distance
Beats close to thy heart.
Look up! I am near thee,
I gaze on thy face,
I see thee, I hear thee,
I feel thine embrace."

So sang Mrs. Charlie at the old Broadwood grand, trusting to her memory for both words and music. The lamp burned behind her on a table, and behind the lamp stood Duggan, who had not heard one word. His entire being was in his eyes, which were starting out of his head with horror. They did not even see Mabel, her lamp-lit neck, or hair; they were fixed upon a big black snake that her song had

charmed out of the piano, that was even now poised to strike, perhaps the very second her song should cease!

And she did not know it, and must not! And her husband lolled contentedly in the veranda, blissfully assured of the effect of her voice on ears that heard not. Only Duggan was there to see and act, to determine how to act before the singing ceased, to stoop and creep toward the piano under cover of the singer and her song.

"And absence but brightens
The eyes that I miss,
And custom but heightens
The spell of thy kiss.
It is not from duty,
Though that may be awed;
It is not from beauty,
Though that be bestowed;
But all that I care for,
And all that I know——"

But the "know" ended in a scream, as musician and music stool were sent flying in a heap; and Shand rushed in-doors to find Duggan thrashing the piano with a lash that made dull thuds, and his wife still screaming as if the assault had begun on her. He was picking her up when the seeming madman turned around, and held the dead snake out at arm's length, by the neck, as he had seized it, between finger and thumb. It was nearly five feet long, and black as night, except underneath near his hand, and where the lamplight picked out a red herringbone pattern at the base of the shining scales.

Hardly a word escaped any of them, as Duggan cast the carcass under the piano, then turned to Charlie and the lamp. Mrs. Charlie watched their backs as she might have watched the snake. Duggan had his knife out, and was doing something that sent his shoulders up to his ears.

"Now something to stop the circulation," she just heard him whisper through his teeth. "Piano string's the thing—have at 'em with my knife!"

His voice was coming back, but the knife had slipped and stuck quivering in the floor. Charlie plucked it up, hurled the piano lid off its hinges, and hacked at the strings till they went off like little rifles, and stung him in the

face. But it was Duggan whom the bride was obliged to watch; he was letting something trickle on the floor, and at the same time puffing at his cigar. It had not gone out, wherever he had had it all this time; it glowed again as he puffed and blew at it like a smith at his forge. When it was so red that tiny sparks began to fly, he raised a red wrist to meet it, and the watcher fled.

At the back of the veranda there was one of those reclining deck chairs with a socket for a tumbler at your elbow; it had not been in use that evening, but Mrs. Charlie was thankful to drop into it now. She put up her feet and was no longer fully aware of what was happening. She heard steps and voices, but only those of her husband and his friend. So, perhaps, the worst was over—there had been marvelously little fuss. Now they seemed to have gone into an inner room; or could they have come out that way without her seeing or hearing them? She sat up, suddenly herself and a woman who had made a fool of herself in the hour of need. The veranda shook under a jangling stride, and Charlie stood over her in his spurs.

"Here you are, little girl! It's going to be all right—feel able to lend a hand?"

"Oh, if I may! I've disgraced you, Charlie. Do tell me what I can do."

"Keep an eye on him. That's about all. Keep him going—amused—talking, if he will! Don't mind if he gets a bit tight; it's the best thing that can possibly happen. He might have that long chair, but don't let him fall asleep."

"And you, Charlie—where are you going?"

"To the township for permanganate of potash, and one or two other things we haven't got. I shan't be much more than an hour."

"You must go yourself?"

"Yes. I know what to get, and time's an object. Besides, Duggan doesn't want them to hear of it at the men's hut; he's frightfully set on that, and one must humor him."

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"But, Charlie, you said he was going to be all right?"

"So he is, I honestly believe, especially with you to keep him up. You might almost sing to him, darling; he was struck of a heap by your voice! You're the one to save his life."

"I ought to be." Her brave voice shook. "He saved mine, didn't he? We can save him between us, can't we, Charlie? Oh, do tell me that we can!"

He told her that they could, and would, if he got off at once—the next she heard was the hoofs of the night horse thundering into space. She lifted her hands to the winking stars, and prayed on her feet as she had never prayed kneeling down. And before her prayer was finished, a forced laugh made her turn.

Duggan was back in the lighted doorway, still steady as a rock, only facing outward this time, and with his right hand merely thrust out of sight between the buttons of his duck jacket. The hand seemed to take up a deal of room, and the sleeve looked tight. That was all she could see of the swelling, and the ligatures were out of sight. In his other hand he held a tall tumbler, very full and yellow with the light of the room striking through the liquor. It even cast its yellow double on the dusty boards at Mrs. Charlie's feet; but both substance and shadow were thus far as steady as the statuesque man himself.

"Poor old Charlie!" he chuckled, as the hoofs ceased throbbing, like the last beats of a pulse.

"Why 'poor'?" she cried hoarsely.

"He's such a new chum still! That wasn't a black snake at all. It was a diamond snake—nonpoisonous!"

"Then what were you doing to your hand—with your knife—with your cigar?"

"Oh, well, there's nothing like being on the safe side." He was coming up to her, very slowly, without spilling a drop from his brimming glass. "In any case it was worth it"—and he smiled—"for an hour of you all to myself! I shall clear out to-night, you see, or at latest in the morning."

She had forced herself to stand and

face him. But her eyes had fallen until the blood all down his ducks arrested them.

"Don't tell me that you deliberately tortured yourself——"

"I didn't. Torture! You can only feel a certain amount. I'd had all I could feel before you started singing." He swayed unexpectedly. "But I was a fool to lose so much blood. D'you mind coming over here?"

He almost staggered to the long chair at the back of the veranda; and the young wife, following automatically, drew a very deep breath. This was only what Charlie had prepared her for; no doubt he had forced quantities of spirit upon Duggan, who, for the reason given with such effrontery, could not very well refuse it. But that reason! It pulled her up, bitterly embarrassed and abased. Then she saw her old friend—for he was that—place his bumper in the wicker socket, still without a spill, and then lower himself into the chair with a sigh of simple weariness. That sigh took her to him.

"It was a dirty trick, I know," he said. "Can you forgive me for it, Mabel?"

"If you're sure it was a trick."

"I'm afraid there's no mistake about that. It was one thing on top of another, that's what did it. That infernal snake—just then—it was enough to make one lose one's head."

"You saved my life first, Harry!"

"Not your life. The brute wasn't poisonous, I tell you; but it might have given you an ugly nip for all that, to say nothing of the fright, and its beastly body round your neck."

"To think that I never saw it!"

"The funny thing is that it didn't deaden the notes."

"It must have been lying on the long bass strings."

"The piano must have been left open after polishing. That's when it would get in."

So they made talk about the concrete climax of events less easy to discuss. Had she never heard of the notorious partiality of snakes for music? No! How interesting! They might have been

sitting out at a dance and trying to get to know each other. But Duggan was lying down, and lying none too still in the treacherous wickerwork. It was as if he was enduring bodily twinges. He was out of the lamplight, however, which came from the room in a clear-cut beam, and illumined Mrs. Charlie when she leaned back in the chair beside him.

"Are you sure there's nothing I can get you?"

"Certain, thanks very much. I'm all right. I only think I may have touched a vein or something."

"But that's dreadful, Harry!"

"Not with piano-wire ligatures. Old Charlie twisted 'em with the pliers; we'd better leave 'em till he comes back, then I'll be as right as the mail."

"You're not touching your drink!"

"It's not necessary, don't you see? You keep fidgeting about what I went and did. But if it makes you happy, and you'll join me, I wouldn't mind one of those cigarettes of yours."

She gave him one, and tried to hold the match; he was quick to take it from her in his steadier hand. But in the match light their eyes met, and his looked big with trouble; their hands touched, and his were cold.

"Why didn't you let Charlie write and tell me he had married you?" said Duggan simply, as he smoked.

"I didn't want to part you, if I could help it."

"I see. Well, I'm going all the same."

"He knows absolutely nothing, Harry!"

"But he will have to know. It's nothing shameful, after all. You chucked me; you've done better. That happens every day. But the trio don't live together."

He laughed ironically to himself. But she had heard him only up to a certain point.

"I chucked you?" she cried.

"I'm sorry I put it in such a beastly way. I'm sorry I said it at all."

"Because you know it isn't true!"

"What?"

"When you came out here, and never wrote a single word!"

Her bosom labored, but not with the passion that had long been dead there; her voice broke, but only with undying indignation. That was the one emotion he might still call to life in her—a reflex spasm of humiliating pain, long past, yet never to be forgotten, and the sharper for his callous bearing about it all. But this was modified, for the moment, by the way he passed his hand across his forehead, as if it ached.

"I believe there's been some big mistake," he said wearily. "Don't let's bother about it now! It's too late; and I didn't get you to myself to rake up the past—at least not that part of it. It's true I didn't write for ages, I was so long in making a fair start. I think we'd better leave it at that, if you don't mind."

"But I do mind!" she burst out. "I'm not thinking of your explanation, but of mine. I haven't come out just to hurt you and have my revenge. I never knew about you until—until Charlie and I—"

"I know. I know," he soothed her, reaching for her hand. He held it only a second. "These flukes—these meetings—of course they aren't really flukes at all—they're our fate. Thank God you did meet! You couldn't help loving him, or he you."

"He was the first," she whispered, "the very first I ever thought of again—after all those years without a word. I nearly broke it off when I did find out. Yet why should I? I had no reason to suppose you would mind. Charlie was quite certain you had never been in love in your life!"

"So my letter did go astray!" This more to himself than her. "I often wondered if it had; but I never had the spirit to write again. It didn't seem quite the game. The whole point was to leave you absolutely free. I promised your people that. They were never keen about me—Mab!"

"Yes, Harry?"

"You're leaning too far forward. I like you near me, but just now I can't

see your face in the light from the door."

"It's not fit to be seen."

"Never mind. It's my last chance. I really am going, you know. And I did want to buck about old times!"

"Buck away," she whispered. But she still leaned forward. And that request was not rewarded.

"What about the old place? How was it looking when you came away?"

"You mean ours? We haven't lived there for ages, Harry."

"I'm sorry. Just live there again for a minute, and let me come and see you. There!" She knew that he had closed his eyes. "Have I come to take you on the pond? I say, look out across those stepping-stones! You'd better let me give you a hand." He held his good one out, and she took it without thinking. "That's better, kiddie!" And they both laughed at the absurd name for her now. "Or is it a dance, and we are sitting out in the rockery? If so, we may get into another row, by Jove!"

"It's not a dance, Harry—" she whispered

"I'm not so sure. Do you remember those colored lights they played on the rockery fountain on state occasions? Emerald, and pink, and lavender; I can see 'em now. I remember the night I found out how it was done, through that trapdoor hidden in the ferns. That was only at a kid's party, Mab, but if it's going to upset you—"

"It's all right, I'm all right," she answered, drawing at a black cigarette. His had not gone out; he lent it to her, and then sipped his whisky for the first time. At once she remembered Charlie's injunctions, but forgot Duggan's cynical confession, and urged him to drink more.

"Not another drop," he said, spilling a quantity as if on purpose. "I've had far too much as it is; otherwise I shouldn't have upset you by talking a whole lot of rot."

He closed his eyes again—and now it was that terror came upon her. He was fast asleep in an instant. It was the very thing she had been charged to pre-

vent. Was it the whisky, or was it—could it be—to her that he had lied? She shook him violently by the shoulder; and his eyes opened within a few inches of hers—opened in paradise, judging from their smile.

"What is it, darling? You don't mean to say I dropped off when sitting out?"

His horror was horrible as he tried to sit up and failed.

"Of course not, Harry, dear. Don't you know where you are?"

"Rather—think I did—those lights!"

She turned round to look, her heart leaping at the thought of succor, company, anybody to share the strain. And all she saw was a frameful of twinkling stars and inky scrub between the posts and lintel of a bush veranda. Never, to be sure, were stars more brilliantly alive or in closer cluster. But those were the only lights.

"Now it's emerald—no! Now it's changed to lavender, and in another minute it'll be pink. Fairyland, I call it—yet your under gardener does it with a bit of colored glass and a bull's-eye lantern, somehow up there in the ferns. I say, Mabel—Mrs. Shand!"

"Dear Harry, I'm so thankful!"

"Why? Have I been talking some more rot? I'm awfully sorry, Mrs. Sh—"

"Don't! I can't bear you to call me that!"

"Well, but I ought to, oughtn't I? It's no use telling Charlie now."

"You mustn't go, Harry; you needn't go, I'm sure you needn't!"

He laughed funnily. "I believe I should have given the show away over that song, if it hadn't been for our friend the blacky."

"The what?"

"That diamond snake. No harm in 'em, bless you, but good judges of music. I say, Mab!"

"Yes, Harry?"

"What on earth did you go and sing that for?"

"Don't ask me. I—I don't know."

"Funny thing is, I didn't hear a word of it at the time. But now I do, every syllable. You'd got as far as 'all that

I care for and all that I know.' If I'd let you finish, the beast might have struck. Ran it rather fine, didn't I?"

"You were splendid, magnificent!"

"I keep on telling you there was no real danger."

"It wouldn't have made any difference if there had been."

"Yet I was cheated out of the end; rather hard, that, wasn't it? I wish you'd give it to me now, Mab!"

"I couldn't, Harry."

"You could!"

And he hummed, in labored whispers:

"But all that I care for—
And all that I know—
Is that without wherefore
I worship thee so!

"Which is absurd," concluded Dugan, out of breath. "I mean—last line but one. I'd like to hear it, all same—if it doesn't bore—if anything could rouse—that's it, *that's* it!"

And Charlie Shand, returning from

the township at the nearest approach to a gallop that he could get out of the station night horse, had the same thing running in his head all the way, to a muffled accompaniment of unshod hoofs on a sandy track. But in the home paddock all that changed into the very voice of his charmer, charming never so wisely in the very song so sensationally interrupted an hour before. It augured well that this time it was sung to a finish. Yet Charlie neither drew rein nor spared spur in his relief, and was only a few lengths nearer home when the voice rang out again—but not in song—

Charlie Shand leaped from the saddle in the station yard, caught up a lamp in his wild rush through the house, and held it on high in the back veranda till the chimney cracked and tinkled at his feet. The naked flame lit up the bowed form of his wife—beside the long deck chair—kneeling over the dead who had died in her arms.



DELIGHT IN DISORDER

A SWEET disorder in the dress
Kindles in clothes a wantonness:
A lawn about the shoulders thrown
Into a fine distraction;
An erring lace, which here and there
Enthralls the crimson stomacher;
A cuff neglectful, and thereby
Ribbons to flow confusedly;
A winning wave, deserving note,
In the tempestuous petticoat;
A careless shoe string, in whose tie
I see a wild civility—
Do more bewitch me, than when art
Is too precise in every part.

Robert Herrick.

MARINERS BEWARE!

Some Rocks and Shoals of Matrimony

AN, Othello, *mon ami*, when you look round on married life, and know what you know, don't you wonder that the bolster is not used a great deal more freely?—*William Makepeace Thackeray.*

LORD HENRY WOTTON: You seem to forget that I am married, and one charm of marriage is that it makes a life of deception absolutely necessary for both parties. I never know where my wife is, and my wife never knows what I am doing. When we meet—we do meet occasionally, when we dine out together, or go down to the duke's—we tell each other the most absurd stories with the most serious faces. My wife is very good at it—much better, in fact, than I am. She never gets confused over her dates, and I always do. But when she does find me out she makes no row at all. I sometimes wish she would; but she merely laughs at me.—*Oscar Wilde.*

How few out of the infinite number of those that marry and are given in marriage wed with those they would prefer of all the world! Nay, how far the greater proportion are joined together by mere motives of convenience, accident, recommendations of friends, or, indeed, not infrequently by the very fear of the event, by repugnance, and a sort of fatal fascination.—*William Hazlitt.*

It goes far toward reconciling me to being a woman, when I reflect that I am thus in no immediate danger of ever marrying one.—*Lady Montagu.*

You may depend upon it that a slight contrast of character is very material to happiness in marriage. To the many of both sexes I am well aware this Eden of matrimony is but a kitchen garden, a thing of profit and convenience, in an even temperature between indifference and liking.—*Samuel Taylor Coleridge.*

"I NOTICE," said Princess Seniavine, "that intelligent women always marry fools——"

"Who bore them."

"Certainly! But superior men would bore them still more!"—*Anatole France.*

MARRIAGE—what an abomination! Love—yes; but not marriage! Love cannot exist in marriage, because love is an ideal; that is to say, something not quite understood—transparencies, color, light, a sense of the unreal. But a wife—you know all about her—who her father was, who her mother was, what she thinks of you, and her opinion of the neighbors over the way. Where, then, is the dream, the *au delà*? There is none. I say in marriage an *au delà* is impossible. —*George Moore.*

LOVE and marriage are different states. Those who are to suffer the evils together, and to suffer often for the sake of one another, soon lose that tenderness of look and that benevolence of mind which arose from the participation of unmingled pleasure and successive amusement.—*Samuel Johnson.*

by
Edith Wharton

Author of
"The Age of Innocence" "The Mother's Recompense"



The Introducers

AT nine o'clock on an August morning Mr. Frederick Tilney descended the terrace steps of Sea Lodge and strolled across the lawn to the cliffs.

The upper windows of the long white façade above the terrace were all close shuttered, for at nine o'clock Newport still sleeps, and he who is stirring enough to venture forth at that unwanted hour may enjoy what no wealth could buy a little later—the privilege of being alone.

Though Mr. Tilney's habits of life, combined with the elegance of his appearance, declared him to be socially disposed, he was not insensible to the rarer pleasures of self-communion, and on this occasion he found peculiar gratification in the thought of having to himself the whole opulent extent of turf and flower border between Ochre Point and Bailey's Beach. The morning was brilliant, with a blue horizon line pure of fog, and such a sparkle on every leaf and grass blade, and on every restless facet of the ever-moving

sea, as would have tempted a less sophisticated fancy to visions of wet bows and a leaping stern, or of woodland climbs up the course of a mountain stream.

But it was so long since Mr. Tilney had found a savor in such innocent diversions, that the unblemished fairness of the morning suggested to him only a lazy well-being associated with escape from social duties, and the chance to finish the French novel over which he had fallen asleep at three o'clock that morning.

It was odd how he was growing to value his rare opportunities of being alone. He who in his earlier years had depended on the stimulus of companionship as the fagged diner-out depends on the fillip of his first glass of champagne, was now beginning to watch for and cherish every momentary escape from the crowd. It had grown to such a passion with him, this craving to have the world to himself, that he had overcome the habit of late rising, and learned to curtail the complications of

his toilet, in order to secure a half hour of solitude before he was caught back into the whizzing social machinery.

"And talk of the solitude of the desert—it's nothing to the Newport cliffs at this hour," he mused, as he threw himself down on a shaded seat invitingly placed near the path which follows the shore. "Sometimes I feel as if the sea, and the cliffs, and the sky line out there, were all a part of the stupid show—the expensive stage setting of a rottenly cheap play—to be folded up and packed away with the rest of the rubbish when the performance is over; and it's good to come out and find it here at this hour, all by itself, and not giving a hang for the ridiculous goings-on of which it happens to be made the temporary background. Well—there's one comfort: none of the other fools really *see* it—it's here only for those who seek it out at such an hour—and as I'm the only human being who does, it's here only for me, and belongs only to me, and not to the impenetrable asses who think they own it because they've paid for it at so many thousand dollars a foot!"

And Mr. Tilney, throwing out his chest with the irrepressible pride of possessorship, cast an eye of approval along the windings of the deserted path which skirted the lawn of Sea Lodge and lost itself in the trim shrubberies of the adjoining estate.

"Yes—it's mine—all mine—and this is the only real possessorship, after all! No fear of intruders at this hour—no need of warning signposts, and polite requests to keep to the path. I don't suppose anybody ever walked along this path at my hour, and I don't care who walks here for the rest of the day!" But at this point his meditations were interrupted by the sight of a white gleam through the adjacent foliage; and a moment later all his theories as to the habits of his neighbors had been rudely shattered by the appearance of a lady who, under the sheltering arch of a wide, lace sunshade, was advancing indolently toward his seat.

"Why, you've got my bench!" she exclaimed, pausing before him, with

merriment and indignation mingling in her eyes as sun and wind contended on the ripples behind her.

"Your bench?" echoed Tilney, rising at her approach, and dissembling his annoyance under a fair pretense of hospitality. "If ever I thought anything on earth was mine, it's this bench."

The lady, who was young, tall and critical looking, drew her straight brows together and smilingly pondered his assertion.

"I suppose you thought that because it happens to stand in the grounds of Sea Lodge instead of Cliffwood—we haven't any benches, by the way; but my theory is a little different, as it happens. I think things belong only to the people who know how to appreciate them."

"Why, so do I. If the bench isn't mine, at least the theory is!" Tilney protested.

"Well, it's mine, too, and it makes the bench mine, you see," the young lady argued with earnestness, "because hitherto I've been the only person who appreciated sitting on it at this hour."

"Ah, hitherto, perhaps—but not since I arrived here last week. I haven't missed a morning," Tilney declared.

She smiled. "That explains the misunderstanding. I've been away for a week, and before that no one ever sat on my bench at this hour."

"And since then no one has ever ever sat on *my* bench at this hour; but, my dear Miss Grantham," Tilney gallantly concluded, "I shall be only too honored if you will make the first exception to the rule by sitting on it in my company this morning."

Miss Grantham was evidently a young lady of judicial temper, for she weighed this assertion as carefully as the other, before answering, with a slight tinge of condescension: "I don't know that you have any more right to ask me to sit on *my* bench, than I have to ask you to sit on *yours*, but for my part I am magnanimous enough to assume just for once that it's *ours*."

Tilney bowed his thanks and seated himself at her side. "I realize how magnanimous it is of you," he returned,

"for, just as you came round the corner, I was saying to myself that this bench was really the only thing in the world I could call my own—"

"And now I've taken half of it away from you! But then," she rejoined, "you've taken the other half from me; and as I was under the same delusion as yourself, we are both in the same situation, and had better accommodate ourselves as best we can to the diminished glory of joint ownership."

"It would be ungrateful of me to reject so reasonable a proposal; but in return for my consent, would you mind telling me how you happen to attach such excessive importance to the ownership of this bench?"

"It isn't the bench alone—it's the bench and the hour. They are the only things I have to myself."

Tilney met her lovely eyes with a look of intelligence. "Ah, that's surprising—very surprising."

"Why so?" she exclaimed, a little resentfully.

"Because it's so exactly my own feeling."

Miss Grantham smiled and caressed the folds of her lace gown. "And is it so surprising that we should happen to have the same feelings?"

"Not in all respects, I trust; but I never suspected you of an inclination for solitude."

She returned his scrutiny with a glance as penetrating. "Well, you don't look like a recluse yourself; yet I think I should have guessed that you sometimes have a longing to be alone."

"A longing? Good heavens, it's a passion, it's becoming a mania!"

"Ah, how well I understand that! It's the only thing that can tear me from my bed!"

"I confess one doesn't associate you with the sunrise," he said, letting his glance rest with amusement on the intricate simplicity of her apparel.

"And you!" She smiled back at him. "If our friends were to be told that Fred Tilney and Belle Grantham were to be found sitting on the cliffs at nine o'clock in the morning, the day after the Summerton ball—"

"And that they had come there, not to meet each other, but to escape from every one else—"

"Oh, there's the point: that's what makes it interesting. If we're in the same box, why shouldn't we be on the same bench?"

"It requires no argument to convince me that we should. But *are* we in the same box? You see I've just come, and when I saw you last night I supposed you were stopping with the Summertons."

She shook her head. "No, I'm next door, at Cliffwood, for the summer."

"At Cliffwood? With the Bixbys?" He glanced at the fantastic chimneys and profusely carved gables which made the neighboring villa rise from its shrubberies like a *pièce montée* from a flower-decked dish.

"Well, why not, if you're at Sea Lodge with Mr. Magraw?"

"Oh, I'm only a poor itinerant devil—"

"And what am I but a circulating beauty? Didn't you know I'd gone into the business too? I hope you won't let professional jealousy interfere with our friendship."

"I'm not sure that I can help it, if you've really gone into the business. But when I last saw you—where was it?—oh, in Athens—"

"Things were different, were they not?" she interposed. "I was sketching and you were archaeologizing—do you remember that divine day at Delphi? Not that you took much notice of me, by the way—"

"Wasn't one warned off the premises by the report that you were engaged to Lord Pytchley?"

She colored, and negligently dropped her sunshade between her eyes and his. "Well, I wasn't, you see—and my sketches were not good enough to sell. So I've taken to this kind of thing instead. But I thought you meant to stick to your digging."

He hesitated. "I was very keen about it for a time; but I had a touch of the sun out in Greece that summer: and a rich fellow picked me up on his steam yacht and carried me off to the

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Black Sea and then to a salmon river in Norway. I meant to go back, but I dawdled, and the first thing I knew they put another chap in my place. And now I'm Hutchins Magraw's secretary."

He sat staring absently at the distant sky line, and perceiving that he was no longer conscious of her presence she quietly shifted her sunshade and let her eyes rest for a moment on his moody profile.

"Yes—that's what I call it, too. I'm Mrs. Bixby's secretary—or Sadie's, I forget which. But how much writing do you do?"

"Well, not much. The butler attends to the invitations."

"I merely keep an eye on Sadie's spelling, and see that she doesn't sign herself 'lovingly' to young men. Mrs. Bixby has no correspondents, and the dinner invitations are engraved."

"And what are your other duties?"

"Oh, the usual things—reminding Mrs. Bixby not to speak of her husband as *Mr. Bixby*, not to send in her cards when people are at home, not to let the butler say 'fine claret' in a sticky whisper in people's ears, not to speak of town as 'the city,' and not to let Mr. Bixby tell what things cost. Mrs. Bixby takes the bit in her teeth at times, but Sadie is such a dear, adaptable creature that, when I've broken her of trying to relieve her callers of their hats, I shall really have nothing left to do. That habit is hard to eradicate, because she is such a good girl, and it was so carefully inculcated at her finishing school."

Tilney reflected. "Magraw is a good fellow, too. There's really nothing to do except to tone him down a little—as you say, one feels as if one didn't earn one's keep."

She flashed round upon him instantly. "Ah, but I didn't say that. I said the ostensible duties were easy—but how about the others?"

He looked at her a little consciously. "What do you mean by the others?"

"I don't know how far you live up to your duties, but I'm horribly conscientious about mine. And of course

what we're both paid for is to be introducers," she said.

"Introducers?" He colored slightly and, flinging his arm over the back of the bench, turned to command a fuller view of her face. "Yes, that is what we're paid for, I suppose."

"And that's what I hate about it, don't you?"

"Uncommonly," he assented with emphasis.

"It isn't that the Bixbys are not nice people—they are, deep down, you know—or at least they would be, if they were leading a real life among their real friends. But the very fact that one is abetting them to lead a false life, and renounce and deny their past, and impose themselves on people who wouldn't look at them if it were not for their money, and who rather resent their intrusion as it is—well, if one oughtn't to be paid well for doing such a job as that, I don't know what it is to work for my living!"

Tilney continued to observe with appreciation the dramatic play of feature by means of which she expressed her rising disgust at her task; but when she ended he merely said in a detached tone: "It's charming, how you've preserved your illusions."

"My illusions? Why, I haven't enough left for decency!"

"Oh, yes, you have. About the Bixbys, and what they would be if one hadn't egged them on. Why not say to yourself that, if they were not vulgar at heart, they would never have let themselves be taken in by this kind of humbug?"

"Is that what you say about Mr. Magraw?"

"I've told you that Magraw is a good fellow. But when I ran across him he was simply aching to see the show, and all I've done is to get him a seat in the front row."

"Yes—but are you not expected to do something more for him?"

"Something more—in what line?"

"Well, I think the Bixbys expect me to make a match for Sadie."

"The deuce they do! Well, we'll marry her to my man."

Miss Grantham uttered a cry of dismay. "Don't suggest it even in joke! Don't you see what a catastrophe it would be?"

"Why should it be a catastrophe?"

"Don't you really see? In the first place we should both be out of a job, and in the second, I should earn the everlasting enmity of the Bixbys. What they want for Sadie is not money but position. Mrs. Bixby tells me that every day."

Tilney received this in meditative silence; then he said with a slight laugh: "Well, if position is all they want, why don't you choose *me* as your candidate?"

Miss Grantham did not echo his laugh; she simply concentrated her gaze on his with a slowly deepening interest before answering: "It's a funny idea—but I believe they might do worse."

Tilney's hilarity increased.

"At any rate," she continued, without noticing it, "there's one thing that you and no one else can do for them, and I really believe that Mrs. Bixby, in her present mood, would be capable of rewarding you with her daughter's hand."

"Good heavens! Then I should have to take a look at Miss Bixby before doing it."

"Oh, Sadie's charming. Didn't you notice her last night at the ball? I managed to smuggle her in, though I couldn't get the others invited. What Mrs. Bixby wants," Miss Grantham earnestly continued, "what she's absolutely sickening for at this moment, is to have Sadie invited to Aline Leicester's little Louis XV. dance to-morrow night. And you are the only person in Newport who can do it. I didn't even have a chance to try—for the very day my invitation came I happened to meet Aline, and she said at once: 'Belle, I see the Bixbys in your eye; but I don't see them in my ballroom.' After that, I tried a little wire pulling, but it simply made her more obstinate—you know her latest pose is to snub the new millionaires; and you are the only person who can persuade her to make an exception for the Bixbys. Aline's fam-

ily feeling is tremendously strong, and every one knows you are her favorite cousin."

Tilney listened attentively to this plea; but when it had ended he said, with a discouraging gesture: "I was just going to try to get an invitation for Magraw!"

"Lump them together, then—it will be just as easy; and if you *should* want Mr. Bixby to do anything for you—such as putting you on to a good tip—"

"Thanks, but I've been put on to too many good tips. If it weren't for the good tips I've had, I should be living like a gentleman on my income."

"Well, you'll make Mrs. Bixby think you the most eligible young man in Newport. And if you could persuade Aline to ask Sadie to the dinner before the dance—"

"*Comme vous y allez!* What would be my return for that?"

She rose with a charming gesture "Who knows, after all? Perhaps only the pleasure of doing me a very great favor."

"That settles it. I'll do what I can. But how about getting your costumes at such short notice?"

"Oh, we cabled out to Worth on the chance." She held out her hand for good-by. "If only there were something I could do for you!"

"Well, there is, as it happens," he rejoined with a smile. "If I succeed in my attempt, let Magraw dance the cotillion with you at Aline's."

She hesitated, visibly embarrassed. "I should be delighted, of course. I'm engaged already, but that's nothing. Only—I'm going to be horribly frank—the Bixbys are rather a heavy load, and I'm not sure I can carry your friend too!"

"Oh, yes, you can. That's my reason for asking you. You see, I really can't help Magraw much. It takes a woman to give a man a start. Aline will say, 'Oh, bring him, if you choose'—but when he comes she won't take any notice of him, or introduce him to any of the nice women. He was too shy to go to the Summertons' last night

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—he's really very shy under his loudness—so Aline's dance will be his first appearance in Newport; and if he's seen dancing the cotillion with you, at a little *sauverie* like that, with only a handful of people in the room, why, he's made, and my hard work is over for the season."

She smiled. "If you take a fancy to Sadie, perhaps it's over for life."

"And if you—by George! No, I don't think I want you to dance the cotillion with Magraw."

"Why not? Do you grudge me a comfortable home for my old age?"

He stood gazing at her as though for the first time his eyes took in the full measure of her grace.

"No—but I grudge *him* even a cotillion with you."

"Ah, you and I were not made to dance cotillions with one another; or do anything together, except conspire at sunrise for each other's material advancement. And that reminds me—I shan't see you again to-day, for we are going to Narragansett on Mr. Bixby's yacht, and to-night we have a dinner at home. But if you succeed with Aline, will you send me a line in the evening?"

He shook his head as they clasped hands once more. "No; but I'll tell you about it here to-morrow morning."

"Very well—I'll be punctual!" she called out to him, as she sped away through the shrubbery.

It was, in fact, Miss Grantham who was first on the scene the next morning; and so eager was she to learn the result of the mission with which she had charged her friend, that, instead of profiting by her few moments of solitude, she sat watching the path and chafing at Mr. Tilney's delay.

When he arrived, politeness restrained the question on her lips; but his first word was to assure her of his success. "You are to bring Miss Bixby to the dinner," he announced.

"Oh, thank you, thank you—you're wonderful!" she exclaimed. "And if there's anything in the world I can do——" She paused suddenly, remem-

bering her side of the compact, and added with nobility: "If it is of any possible advantage to Mr. Magraw to make my acquaintance, I shall be very glad——"

She had already observed in Tilney a marked depression of manner, which even this handsome reaffirmation of her purpose did not dispel.

"Oh," he merely said, "I did not mean to hold you so closely to your bargain." And with that he seated himself at her side, and lapsed into a state of dumb preoccupation.

Miss Grantham suffered this as long as it was possible for a young lady of spirit to endure; then she determined to make Mr. Tilney aware of her presence by withdrawing it.

"I am afraid," she said, rising with a smile, "that, though you welcomed me so handsomely yesterday, my being here seriously interferes with your enjoyment of the hour, and I am going to propose a compromise. Since it is agreed that we are joint proprietors of this bench, and entitled to an equal share of its advantages, and since our sitting on it together practically negatives those advantages, I suggest that we occupy it on alternate mornings—and to show my gratitude for the favor you have done me, I will set the example by withdrawing to-day."

Tilney met her smile with a look of unrelieved melancholy. "I don't wonder," he said, "that you find solitude less oppressive than my company; but since our purpose in seeking this bench is to snatch an hour's quiet enjoyment, and since enjoyment of any sort is impossible to me to-day, it is obviously you who are entitled to remain here, and I who ought to take myself away." And he held out his hand in farewell.

Miss Grantham detained it in hers. "To have you surrender your rights because you are too miserable to enjoy them, leaves me with no heart to profit by my own; and if you wish me to remain, you must stay also, and tell me what it is that troubles you."

She repeated herself as she spoke, and Tilney, with a deprecating gesture, resumed his place at her side.

"My dear Miss Grantham, the subject is too trifling to mention; I was only trying to calculate how long one could live in Venice on a hundred dollars."

"Why in Venice—and why a hundred dollars?"

"Because, when my passage is paid, it will be all the ready money I possess, and I have always heard that one could live very moderately in Venice."

Miss Grantham flushed and threw a quick glance at him. "You're not thinking of deserting?" she cried reproachfully.

The young man returned her look. "Deserting—whom?" he inquired.

"Well, me, if you choose! You can't think the comfort it's been to me, since yesterday, to know that there were two of us. I understand now how humane it is to chain convicts together!"

Tilney considered this with a faint smile. "How long have you been at it?" he asked.

"At the Bixbys? I joined them last April in Paris."

"Ah, well—I've been six months with Magraw. It wasn't so bad when we were yachting and knocking about the world—but since we've taken to society it has become unendurable."

"Yes. I didn't mind ordering the Bixby's dresses as much as I mind providing opportunities for their wearing them."

"I don't so much mind trotting Magraw about—though you know it's nonsense about your having to dance with him this evening——"

"No matter about that. What is it that bothers you?"

"The whole preposterous situation. Magraw's the best fellow in the world—but there are moments when he takes me for the butler."

"Oh, I know," she sympathized. "Mrs. Bixby——"

"That isn't the worst, though: it's the reaction. He took me for the butler yesterday afternoon—and in the evening I found a ruby scarfpin on my dressing table."

But her sympathy was ready for any demand on it. "I know, I know——"

she reiterated; and then, breaking off, she added with a mounting color: "You know I couldn't go to the dance to-night if Mrs. Bixby didn't pay for my dress."

"Oh, the cases are not the same; and it's different for a woman."

"Why are the cases not the same? And why should I not be humiliated by what humiliates you?"

He shrugged his shoulders ironically. "I'm not humiliated by anything that poor Magraw does to me; I'm humiliated by what I do to *him*!"

"What you do?"

"Yes. What right have I to behave like a gentleman, and return his scarfpins?"

"At least you do return them! And I can't return the dresses. Oh, it's detestable either way!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, especially when one succumbs to the weakness of hating *them* instead of oneself. I hate Magraw this morning," he confessed.

She rose with an impatient glance at her watch. "Dear me, I must go. I promised Sadie to see the dressmaker at half past nine: she's coming to alter our fancy dresses. You see I felt sure you would get Sadie's invitation. I want you to know her," she continued. "She's really a very nice girl. I should like her immensely if I didn't have to accept so many favors from her."

"Ah, you've just expressed my feeling about Magraw. I really should like your opinion of him," he added.

"Well, you shall have it—to-morrow morning."

"Here?" he rejoined with sudden interest.

"Why not? You know I mean to dance with him this evening."

The morning after the dance it was Miss Grantham's turn to arrive late at the tryst; and when she did so, it was with the air of having a duty to discharge rather than a pleasure to enjoy. "Mr. Tilney," she said, advancing resolutely to the bench on which he sat awaiting her, "my only object in coming this morning is——"

He rose with extended hand. "To

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let me thank you, I hope, for the generous way in which you fulfilled your share of the compact? It was awfully good of you to be so nice to Magraw."

She colored vividly, but held his gaze. "As it happens, I *liked* Mr. Magraw. But if I had known the means you had used to obtain his invitation——"

Tilney colored in turn, but they continued to face each other boldly.

"Did Aline betray me? How like a woman!" he exclaimed.

"I can quite understand," Miss Grantham witheringly continued, "the importance you attached to having Mr. Magraw invited to your cousin's dance. *You had to make some return for the scarfpin.* But to use my name as a pretext—to tell Aline Leicester that I was trying to marry Mr. Magraw!"

"Oh, I didn't say *trying*—I said you meant to," Tilney corrected.

"As if that made it any better! To let that man think——"

"He'll never hear of it; and you don't seem to realize that it's not easy to extract an invitation from Aline."

"I don't know that it was absolutely necessary that Mr. Magraw should receive one!"

Tilney, at this, raised his head with a challenging air. "You appeared to think it absolutely necessary that Miss Bixby should."

"Well—I don't see——"

"You don't see how I got *hers*? I dare say you'll think the same method is even more objectionable when the situation is reversed——"

She stared at him with growing disapproval. "You don't mean to say that you let Aline think you wanted to marry Sadie Bixby?"

"I told you there was nothing I wouldn't stoop to. I suppose you think that horribly low."

Her stare resolved itself into a faint sound of laughter. "Good heavens, how enchanted Mrs. Bixby will be!"

"The deuce she will—but of course the joke can easily be explained."

"To whom? To Mrs. Bixby? I'm glad you think so. I should have said it would be difficult."

"Oh, Mrs. Bixby will never hear of it. I told Aline in the strictest confidence——"

"Every one at the dance was congratulating me on my conquest of Mr. Magraw. I don't see why Aline should keep one secret and not the other."

Tilney's brow darkened ominously. "Well, at any rate, I'll soon undeceive Magraw!"

"A thousand thanks. And I suppose you leave it to me to undeceive Sadie? She talked of you all the way home. Of course, you're almost the only decent man she's met."

"Ah, then the remedy is simple enough. You've only to introduce a few others."

"Yes, I've thought of that." Miss Grantham examined him with a cold smile. "But are you quite sure you want me to?"

Tilney met her question with another. "What on earth do you mean?"

"I'm not stupid in such cases, and I could see that Sadie was interested. Did you find her so perfectly impossible?"

"Impossible? I thought her very pretty."

"That's going to the other extreme—but she certainly looked her best last night. Still, before deciding, I should want you to see her by daylight—and without the paint——"

"Oh, she had on very little paint. One could see her own color through it."

"Yes—she has an unfortunate way of getting red——"

"At that age I should call it blushing."

Miss Grantham's face grew suddenly stern. "Of course," she said, "I should never forgive myself if you were only trifling with Sadie——"

Tilney paused. "But if I were in earnest?" he suggested.

She gazed at him intently for a moment. "After all, I might be saving her from something worse!"

For two mornings after that Tilney, to his secret regret, had the bench on the cliffs to himself. On the third

morning he was detained indoors somewhat later than usual on pressing business of his employer's; and when he emerged from the house he was surprised, and considerably dismayed, to find his seat tenanted by the incongruous figure of Mr. Hutchins Magraw.

Given his patron's unmatutinal habits, and rooted indifference to the beauties of nature, it was impossible to conceive what whim had drawn him to so unlikely a spot at so improbable an hour; and Tilney's first impulse was to approach the seat, and allay his curiosity by direct inquiry. Hardly, however, had he begun to advance when the flutter of a white skirt through the Cliffwood shrubberies caused him to retreat abruptly into the covert of lilac bushes edging the lawn. It was by a mere accident, of course, that an unknown female, wearing a white gown, happened to be walking along the path from that particular direction. The path was open to the public, and there was no reason to assume any coincidence between—

Tilney drew a sharp breath. Mr. Magraw had risen and was advancing in the direction of the approaching petticoat; and as it was impossible for him to recognize its wearer from where he sat, it was obvious that he expected some one, and that the invisible female was no casual stroller drawn forth by the beauty of the morning. The next moment this conjecture was unpleasantly confirmed; for Miss Grantham emerged from the shrubbery, and placed her hand in Mr. Magraw's without perceptible surprise. He, then, had also been expected; and she had actually had the effrontery to select, as the scene of their tryst, the seat which, by every right of friendship, should have been kept sacred to her conversations with Fred Tilney!

"The idea of telling him about my bench!" Resentment of her perfidy was for the moment uppermost in Tilney's breast, or was, at any rate, the only sentiment to which he chose to give explicit expression. But other considerations surged indignantly beneath it—wonder at woman's unac-

countableness, disgust at her facility, disappointment, above all, that this one little episode, saved from the wreckage of many shattered illusions, should have had so premature and unpoetic an ending.

"Magraw—if only it hadn't been Magraw!"

He had meant to turn away and reënter the house; but a feeling of mingled curiosity and wretchedness kept him rooted in his hiding place, while he followed with his eyes the broad, swaggering back of Mr. Hutchins Magraw, as it attended Miss Grantham's slender silhouette across the lawn.

"I hadn't realized how disgustingly fat the man had grown. One would think a fellow with that outline would know better than to rig himself out in a check a foot square, and impale his double chin on the points of that preposterous collar! It's odd how little the most fastidious women notice such details. If they did, fewer men would make themselves ridiculous. Why are they standing there, looking up at the house? Perhaps, after all, it *was* an accident, their meeting. No—they're making straight for the bench—by George, I believe they were looking at the house to make sure I wasn't coming! Don't be alarmed, my dear Miss Grantham, I've no desire to interfere with your amusements. I see now, though, why Magraw was in such a hurry to have me balance his bank book this morning. Just a dodge to keep me indoors, of course. It's beastly bad taste, anyhow, to make a poor devil like me go over a bank book with such an indecently big balance. That's the kind of thing that makes a man turn socialist. Why the devil should Magraw have all those millions while I—well, to be sure, poor devil, he needs them all to make up for his other deficiencies. I'd like to see how long Belle Grantham would share that bench with him if it weren't for his bank account! It must be hard work to talk to Magraw at nine o'clock in the morning. I wonder what the deuce she's saying to him?"

The two objects of Tilney's contem-

plation had by this time settled themselves on the seat which their observer still chose to call his own, and something in their attitudes seemed to announce that theirs was no transient alighting, but the deliberate installation which precedes an earnest talk.

"Well, she could talk to anybody, at any hour of the day or night! That's her trade, poor girl, as much as it is mine. Only I can't see why she should give Magraw my particular hour. Now that I've given him such a good start they've plenty of other chances of meeting. But perhaps she's afraid of competition, and wants to clinch the business by this morning interview. Poor girl! How she must hate it at heart! I'll do her the justice to say that if she had enough to keep body and soul together, she'd never look at a Magraw. But if this hand-to-mouth life is hard on a man, it's ten times worse for a woman—and her day is over sooner, too. Poor girl! No wonder she shrinks at the idea of growing old in such a trade. To see people cooling off, and the newcomers crowding her out—how can I blame her for being afraid to face such a future? Why, I ought to do what I can to help her—but to help her to Magraw! Bah—there's something rotten in our social system; but it isn't her fault, and only a primitive ass of a man would be fool enough to blame her, instead of pitying her as a fellow victim."

At this point Miss Grantham started up with an apprehensive gesture with which Tilney was painfully familiar. "She's had to look at her watch to realize how time was flying. She doesn't seem to find it goes so slowly with Magraw. Perhaps my pity's wasted, after all. That's the way she always lingers on after she has said she couldn't possibly stay another minute. Poor Magraw! She's playing him for all she's worth, and I don't suppose he even knows he's on the hook. Oh, I don't blame her—not in the least!—only I think she might have chosen another place for their meetings. Hardened wretch as I am, I was beginning to have a sentiment for that bench—it

would never have occurred to me to sit there with Miss Bixby, for instance. It's queer how a woman's taste deteriorates when she associates with common men—but I mean to let Miss Grantham know that, though she's welcome to Magraw, she can't have my bench into the bargain!"

By this time the couple under observation had completed their lingering adieux, the gentleman returning across the lawn to his house, while the lady retraced her way toward Cliffwood. Tilney remained in concealment while Mr. Magraw strode by within a few feet, the fatuous smile of self-complacency upon his lips; then the young man, emerging behind his patron's back, struck across the lawn and overtook Miss Grantham as she turned into the adjoining grounds.

She paused as she became aware of Tilney's approach, and cast a rapid glance in the direction from which he had come; but he had taken care not to show himself till Magraw had vanished in the shrubberies, and he was quick to note the look of reassurance in Miss Grantham's eyes. She held out her hand, blushing slightly, but self-possessed.

"*J'ai failli attendre!*" she quoted with an indulgent smile; and the smile had well-nigh stung her companion to immediate retaliation. But he meditated a subtler revenge, and dissembling his resentment, asked innocently:

"Have you been here long?"

"It has certainly seemed so," she replied in the same tone.

"Well, at any rate, my involuntary delay has enabled you to enjoy what you originally came out to seek," and, in reply to her puzzled glance, he added pointedly, "the pleasures of solitude."

Unmoved by the thrust, she turned a smiling look on him. "But what if you have made them lose their flavor?"

"Then it was almost worth my while to have stayed away!"

She held out her hand. "The experiment was so successful that you need not try it again," she said sweetly. "But time flies, and I must hasten back into captivity."

He detained her hand to ask sentimentally: "I hope you are not losing your taste for freedom?" and she replied, as she hastened away: "Come and see—come and see to-morrow!"

He stood in the path where she had left him, and slowly drew from his pocket Mr. Magraw's latest gift—a jeweled cigarette case. He took out the cigarettes, transferred them to his pocket, and then, with a free swing of the arm, flung their receptacle into the sea.

"Do you come and see to-morrow!" he muttered, addressing himself to Miss Grantham's retreating figure; then he lit a cigarette, and walked rapidly back to Sea Lodge.

"I shouldn't have thought it of her!" he said as he entered the house.

Two mornings later Tilney, with a beating heart, descended the terrace of Sea Lodge, and once more directed himself toward the bench on the cliff.

He was not only on time, but a few minutes before the hour; yet it was something of a surprise to him to find the bench still untenanted. He seated himself, lit a cigarette with deliberation, and drew from his pocket a note stamped "Cliffwood" and bearing the date of the previous evening.

DEAR MR. TILNEY: Much as I dislike to intrude upon the solitude which I know you value so highly, I must ask you to spare me a few moments to-morrow morning; and I sent this line in advance in order that my coming may not interfere with any other arrangements. Yours sincerely,

BELLE GRANTHAM.

Tilney reread this note with an air of considerable complacency; then he laid it carefully back in his note case, and rose to meet Miss Grantham as she made her appearance around the curve of the path.

The morning was chilly, and veiled in a slight haze, too translucent to be called a fog, but perceptible enough to cast a faint grayness over sea and sky. Seen in this tempered light, Miss Grantham's face seemed to lose its usual vivacity and be subdued to the influence of the atmosphere; and her

manner of greeting Tilney had the same tinge of soberness.

"I must excuse myself," she began, "for again intruding on your privacy——"

"My privacy?" Tilney gallantly interposed. "Was it not long since understood between us that the privacy of this spot belongs as much to you as to me?"

"Long since—yes," she replied; "but so much has happened in the interval." She paused, and added in a significant tone: "Since I came here yesterday morning, and found you sitting on this bench with Sadie Bixby."

Tilney feigned a successful show of embarrassment. "You came here yesterday morning——?"

"By appointment, as you evidently do not remember," she continued coldly. "It is a mistake one does not make twice, and my only object in asking to see you this morning——"

"One moment," Tilney interposed. "Before you go on, I must say in my own defense that I assumed our compact about the use of this seat had been abrogated when I came out the day before yesterday, and found you sharing it with Magraw."

There was no mistaking the effect of this thrust. Her color rose painfully, and she forced a laugh as she replied: "The day before yesterday? Ah, yes—that was the morning you were so late. Mr. Magraw saw me from the house, and took pity on my deserted state."

Tilney colored also at this fresh evidence of her duplicity.

"I beg your pardon—but does not your memory deceive you? It seemed to me that Magraw was waiting on the bench, and that it was *you* who took pity—if I am not mistaken."

She drew herself up and flashed an outraged glance at him. "You were watching us, then?" she exclaimed.

"Oh—*watching!* I was merely repairing to our seat at my usual hour."

"At your usual hour? But Mr. Magraw told me you were not coming—that you would be busy all the morning with some writing——" She broke off,

seeing herself more deeply involved with each word.

"Some writing he had given me to do? Precisely," Tilney answered with scorn. "Only, he had underrated either my impatience to see you, or my head for figures—or both."

She received this in an embarrassed silence, and softened by her embarrassment he added: "It is not for me to discuss your arrangements; but I confess I wondered a little that you chose our bench as a meeting place."

She hesitated a moment, and then said in a deprecating tone: "It is the only place where I can see any one alone!"

"And you wished to see Magraw alone?"

Their eyes met defiantly, but hers fell first as she answered: "Yes—I did wish to."

Tilney bowed ceremoniously. "In that case, of course, nothing remains to be said."

They had both remained standing during this short colloquy, but she now seated herself and signed to him to do the same.

"Yes—something remains for me to say; and it was for the purpose of saying it that I asked you to meet me this morning."

Tilney, without replying, placed himself at the opposite end of the bench.

"What I wish to ask," she continued in a decisive tone, "is your object in meeting Miss Bixby here yesterday."

The temerity of the question was so surprising to her companion that for a moment he gazed at her without speaking; then he replied with a faint smile: "If there is any right of priority in such inquiries, perhaps I am entitled to ask first what was your object in meeting Magraw here the day before that."

She repressed her impatience, and returned gently: "The cases are surely not quite alike; but I thought I had already given you my answer."

"That you wished to see him alone? Well, I had the same object in asking Miss Bixby to meet me."

"But you must see that in the case

of a young girl—especially a girl as inexperienced as Sadie—

Tilney raised his hand with a deprecating gesture. "Are you not falling into the conventional mistake of assuming that a man cannot seek to be alone with a young girl except for the purpose of making love to her?"

"Well, what other purpose—"

He looked at her calmly: "Then it was to promote that purpose that you asked Magraw to meet you here the day before I met Miss Bixby?"

It was Miss Grantham's turn to color, and she fulfilled the obligation handsomely. "I see no object in such cross-questioning—"

"Ah, pardon me, but it was you who began it."

"It was my duty to question you about Sadie. You can't imagine I do it for my pleasure—but her parents are too inexperienced to protect her."

"To protect her? Then you consider me hopelessly detrimental—"

Miss Grantham drew a quick breath. "Why not have told me at once that you wished to marry her? Every one is saying so, of course; but I could not help remembering that your intentions have not always been so—"

"Specific?" he suggested ironically.

"Well, you are still unmarried," she observed.

"Yes," he said musingly. "It takes a pretty varied experience of life to find out that there are worse states than marriage."

Miss Grantham rose with a smile. "Since you have found it out," she said generously, "I can congratulate you with perfect sincerity. Sadie is a dear little creature—"

"But too good for me? Is that what you meant to add?"

"No, for when you find out how good she is you'll want to be worthy of her."

He received this in silence, but when she held out her hand for good-by he said: "I wonder if it's not my duty to protect Magraw? He hasn't even an inexperienced parent."

She met his smile steadily, but he felt the sudden resistance of her hand. "Mr. Magraw," she returned, with-

drawing it, "would be quite safe if Sadie were."

"If Sadie——"

She broke into a laugh. "If you're planning to take the bread out of my mouth, I must do something in the way of self-preservation." And as he remained silent, feeling a rather tragic import under her pleasantry, she added wearily: "I can't begin this kind of thing over again—I simply can't!"

Tilney's discouraged gesture showed his comprehension of her words. "To whom do you say it?" he exclaimed.

"Well, then, let us drop phrases, and admit frankly that we're trying to marry each other's wards—or whatever you choose to call them!"

He did not answer, but she continued, with a kind of nervous animation: "And that we'll do all we can—that we *honorably can*—to help each other's plans, and see each other through."

The young man still remained silent, his eyes absently fixed on the line of sea from which the veil of mist was gradually receding; and before he had found a reply a footman, hastening across the lawn from the house, broke in upon his meditations.

"Beg pardon, sir, but Mr. Magraw wishes you to come in immediately, sir, to answer the telephone for him."

Tilney turned abruptly toward his companion. "By Heaven, yes, we'll see each other through!" he exclaimed.

Though Tilney and Miss Grantham had parted without any reference to future meetings at the same spot, each was now drawn to the bench on the cliffs by a new motive—the not unpardonable desire to see if the other had again extended its hospitality to a third party.

Their mutual reconnoitering did not, for several mornings, carry them farther than the most distant point from which the bench was visible; when, perceiving it to be untenanted, they respectively retreated, without having discovered each other's maneuver.

The fifth day, however, was so foggy

that distant espionage was impossible; and Tilney's suspicions having been aroused by the unusual amount of correspondence with which his patron had burdened him overnight, he determined to ascertain by direct inspection if the sanctity of the bench had again been violated. It would have been hard to say why, in his own thoughts, he still applied such terms to the possibility of Miss Grantham's resorting to the spot in company with her suitor. Tilney fully acquiesced in the inevitableness of the course they had agreed upon; but if his reason accepted the consequences, his sensibilities made the process unpleasant to contemplate. He would have been prepared to append his signature to a matrimonial contract drawn up between Miss Grantham and his employer; but it irritated him that an arrangement so purely utilitarian should be disguised under the charming futilities of courtship.

"The real grossness is not in viewing marriage as a business partnership, but in pretending that one doesn't," he summed up, as he crossed the damp lawn with the waves of gray fog coiling around him like a phantom sea.

Through their pale surges he could just discern, as he approached the bench, an indeterminate outline hovering near it; and the outline proclaiming itself, on nearer inspection, as of his own sex, Tilney was about to turn aside when another figure appeared from the direction of Cliffwood.

"It's odd," he mused, trying to philosophize upon his own discomfiture—"it's odd how the fog distorts a silhouette. I could have sworn I should have known her anywhere, and yet this deceptive vapor—or my nerves, or the two together—make her look so much shorter—and I'll swear I never saw her swing her arm as she walked. I suppose it comes from associating with a boulder like——"

He drew back with a suppressed exclamation as the small feminine outline showed more clearly through a partial break in the fog.

"Why, it looks—no, it can't be! Hanged if I know, she's so bundled up.

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Well, it's not *she*, at any rate; and if Magraw, at this stage of the proceedings, has the indecency to be meeting other women here, it's almost my duty to the poor girl to let her know before it's too late to break with him."

He was surprised at the immediate sense of lightness which this conclusion produced in him. He was sorry for Miss Grantham, of course, when she'd so nearly landed her man; but, hang it, there were as good fish in the sea—and meanwhile she must, at all costs, be saved from the humiliation of committing herself farther. His first impulse had been the somewhat cruel one of putting the unvarnished facts before her; but farther reflection made him shrink from this course, and cast about for some more humane expedient.

"If she could only be made to think that she can do better than Magraw—and she ought to, with half a chance, poor child! I can't be wholly sorry that she should not be sacrificed to this particular monster—not that Magraw's not a good fellow in himself; I dare say the Minotaur was liked in his own set—but he should have stayed there, that's all."

While engaged in these considerations, Tilney had prudently withdrawn into the Cliffwood shrubberies; and he was just deciding to effect his escape through the Bixbys' grounds, rather than run the chance of being discovered by the tenants of the bench, when, on issuing from his retreat, he beheld the indistinct gleam of a white dress halfway down the Cliffwood lawn. This time, even though the fog had thickened, there was no mistaking the form and movement of the shrouded figure; or was it some subtler sense than that of sight that so positively assured him of Miss Grantham's nearness? At any rate, he advanced to meet her without a moment's hesitation, determined to protect her, by whatever expedient, from the embarrassment of interrupting the colloquy on the bench. He had but a moment in which to consider how this should be effected; but it was not the first time he had trusted to his gift of improvisation in delicate situations, and he was now sus-

tained by the unwonted sense of his complete disinterestedness. The progress of his own affairs had in fact made it impossible for him to interfere from personal motives; and he thus had the support of knowing that his intervention was quite unaffected by selfish considerations.

"I'm almost glad," he reflected, "that I *am* committed, if one of the first consequences is to enable me to act as her friend, without any afterthought, or any possibility of her suspecting me of not playing fair. One of my reasons for wanting to settle my own future has always been the desire to help her; and little Sadie is far too good a girl not to understand—"

At this point he found himself face to face with Miss Grantham, who, suddenly discerning him through the fog, drew back with a slight start of surprise.

"I had a feeling that I might meet you this morning," he said in a tone of undisguised pleasure; and even as he spoke, his half-formed plan for her rescue began to dissolve in the glow of happiness which her nearness always produced. He was annoyed to find that his self-control was so completely at the mercy of her presence; but he could no more resist the sudden reaction of his pulses from reason to feeling than he could dispel the softly enveloping fog which seemed to act as the accomplice of his wishes.

"If I can only make her think she can do better than Magraw," he kept mechanically repeating to himself; but the only expedient that occurred to him was one which both prudence and honor rejected.

Miss Grantham's first words threw his ideas into still deeper confusion.

"Mr. Tilney," she said, without heeding his greeting, "are you, or are you not, engaged to Sadie Bixby?"

The abruptness of the inquiry, and the sternness of her tone, had a not wholly displeasing effect on the young man; but their only perceptible result was to reduce him to an embarrassed silence.

Miss Grantham gave a faint laugh.

"I suppose I may consider myself answered? And in that case, I have only to apologize for asking so indiscreet a question—"

Tilney cleared his throat nervously. "I am not aware that I have either answered your question or shown that I regard it as indiscreet—"

"Your silence did both," she returned with some impatience. He made no reply, and after a moment's pause she added, with a sudden assumption of playfulness: "Well, if this is really to be our last meeting—as I suppose it is—shall we not celebrate it by sitting together for a few moments on our poor dear old bench?"

As she spoke she began to move in the direction of the seat, apparently assuming that her companion would offer no opposition to her proposal. But Tilney, with a vague exclamation, laid his hand on her arm. "Don't you think it's rather too damp to sit out of doors?"

He reddened under the laugh with which she met this incongruous objection.

"My poor friend—would she really mind so much? I was foolish enough to think you might give me this last morning—"

"The whole day is at your service," he interposed nervously, "but—"

"Ah, yes; there will always be a *but* between us now. No wonder men get on so much better than women; they are so much more prudent! Now, even if I were engaged to Mr. Magraw—" She broke off, and he fancied he could see her flush through the fog.

He turned on her abruptly. "Are you? There's the point!" he exclaimed.

She drew back, slightly disconcerted, but recovering herself at once, added in the same playful tone: "I was about to say that, even if I *were*, I should not feel there was any disloyalty to my future in giving this last hour to *our* past."

Her light emphasis on the pronoun threw him into a glow of pleasure, through which discretion and foresight loomed as remote as objects in the fog;

but when she added, with a half-sad laugh, "I should not hesitate to go back to our bench for the last time—" he broke out, with a fresh leap of apprehension: "Ah, but you couldn't, if it meant to you what it does to me!"

He had spoken the words at hazard, snatching at them as the readiest means of diverting her purpose; but once uttered they seemed to fill the whole air, and to create a silence which neither speaker had, for a moment, the courage to fill.

Womanlike, Miss Grantham was the first to recover her self-possession. "I am sure," she said sweetly, "that we shall both look back often on our quiet morning talks, and I can't think that the persons with whom our futures may be associated will be defrauded by our treasuring such memories."

She spoke with a sadness so poignant to Tilney that for a moment he stood without replying, and during the pause she again advanced a few steps nearer to the bench.

The young man broke into a scornful laugh. "*Defrauded?* Good heavens—one can't defraud people of treasures they are utterly incapable of valuing!"

She caught this up with a vehemence that surprised him. "Oh, do you feel that too? It's just what I mean," she exclaimed.

"Feel it—" He stopped before her, blocking her way. "Do you suppose I've felt anything else, night or day, since the accursed day when we agreed—"

He interrupted himself with a last effort at self-control, and she replied in a low tone of exquisite pleading: "Well, then, if you *do* feel it, why not go back for a moment to our bench?"

Tilney groaned. "Can't we talk as well here? Let us walk a little way—we shall be alone anywhere in this fog. Anywhere but on that confounded bench," he mentally added.

Miss Grantham uttered an ironical exclamation. "Ah, you've promised her, I see. Was it one of the conditions? In that case, of course—"

"There were no conditions—and if there had been—"

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"Oh, be careful! I want to talk of our past, and not of our future."

Tilney groaned again. "If only it could be our future— Belle, what a beastly bad turn we've done each other, after all!"

"Don't let us talk of the present, either, please." She laid a restraining touch on his arm. "Why should we give each other this pain when it's too late?"

"Too late?" He paused, remembering that, for him at least, it *was* too late; but an irresistible impulse prompted him to add: "If it hadn't been, tell me at least—*would you have dared to, Belle?*"

They stood looking at each other, mysteriously isolated in the magic circle of the fog.

"Dared? I am daring more now—more than I have courage for!" she murmured, half to herself.

The admission had well-nigh broken down the last barriers of Tilney's self-restraint; but at the moment of surrender he suddenly recalled his own state of bondage. He had but to lead Miss Grantham to the bench, and she would find herself free; but when she turned to reward him as liberators expect to be rewarded, with what a sorry countenance must he refuse her gift!

He dropped the hand he had caught in his, and said in a low voice: "You were right just now, and I was wrong. We must not even talk of our past, lest we should be tempted to think of our present or our future. I happen to know that I am not doing any one a serious wrong in speaking to you as I have; but my own case is different."

"Your own case is different?" Miss Grantham interposed, with a sudden change of voice and expression. "If you think you can make love to me without doing Mr. Magraw a serious wrong, I should like to know why I may not listen to you without——"

Tilney received her attack with a disarming humility. "I said the cases were different, because, in a moment of incredible folly, I have tried to attract the interest of a trustful, affectionate girl——"

Miss Grantham interrupted him with a laugh. "Do you mean that," she asked ironically, "for a description of Sadie Bixby?"

Her tone aroused an incongruous flash of resentment in Tilney. "I see no difficulty," he returned, "in identifying the young lady from my words."

"If you really believe them to apply to her, I cannot see how you can excuse yourself for being here with me at this moment!" She laughed again, and then, to Tilney's surprise, drew nearer, and once more laid her hand on his arm.

"My poor friend, it is I who am the real offender, and not you. Believe me, I would not have let you speak to me as you have to-day, if I had not known—if I had not almost felt it my duty to be kind to you—to do what I could to atone——"

"To be kind to me? To atone? What on earth are you talking about?" exclaimed Tilney, startled by this unexpected echo of his inmost thoughts.

"Alas, it was a foolish impulse, and one which only our old friendship could justify. I forgot for a moment that I was not free, in my desire to prepare you—to console you in advance—for a blow——"

"A blow? You're not married?" burst from Tilney.

She paused, and gazed at him wonderingly but not unkindly.

"I was speaking of yourself—yourself and Sadie. I feel myself so deeply to blame——"

Tilney interrupted her with an air of inexpressible relief. "We're both to blame for abetting each other in such suicidal folly. As if either of us was made to give up life and liberty for a bank balance! But I don't reproach you, Belle—it was more my fault than yours; and I deserve that I should be the one to pay the penalty!"

"The penalty? The penalty of marrying Sadie?" she breathlessly interposed.

"Of marrying any one but you!" he returned recklessly; and at the retort, a veil of sadness fell suddenly upon her eager face.

"It's too late to think of that now; but if you really feel as you say——"

Tilney again cut her short. "It's too late for me, I know; but if *you* really feel as you say, thank Heaven, Belle, it's not too late for you!"

She drew back a step, and both paused, as though dazed by the shock of their flying words. But as Tilney again approached her, she raised her hand and said gravely. "I don't know what you mean, but I can explain what I mean if you'll only——"

"One moment, please. I can explain, too, if you'll only——"

He caught her hand, and began to lead her hurriedly across the lawn to the bench.

"Only what?" she panted, trying to keep pace with his flying strides; and he called back across his shoulder: "Only come to the bench—and be quick!"

"To the bench? Why, haven't I been trying all this time to take you there?" she cried after him, between tears and laughter.

"Yes; but I didn't know; at least *you* didn't know——"

"Didn't know what?"

"Whom you'd find there!"

She pulled back at this, detaining him

forcibly. "Good heavens," she gasped, "do you mean to say that *you've* known all this time?"

"Do you think I should have dared to say what I have if I hadn't——"

"Hadn't known about Sadie——"

"*Sadie?* I suppose you mean Magraw?"

"Mr. Magraw?" She stopped short, and snatched her hand away with an indignant gesture.

"Mr. Tilney, who do you think is sitting on that bench?"

He faced around on her with equal indignation. "I don't *think*: I know. Magraw is sitting there with a woman."

"You're utterly mistaken! I happen to know that it's Sadie Bixby who is sitting there with a man."

There was a long pause between them, charged with a gradual rush of inner enlightenment; then Tilney suddenly burst into a huge, world-defying laugh.

"Well, then, don't you see——"

"I don't see anything more than if the fog were inside me!" she wailed.

"Don't you see that Magraw and Miss Bixby must be sitting there together, and that, in that case, nothing remains for you and me but to find a new seat for ourselves?"



TO IANTHE

YOU smiled, you spoke, and I believed,
By every word and smile deceived.
Another man would hope no more.
Nor hope I what I hoped before;
But let not this last wish be vain:
Deceive, deceive me once again!

Walter Savage Landor.



THE BOUDOIR OF A BEAUTY

We flatter ourselves that the much-advertised "aids to beauty" are a modern refinement, forgetting that the art of cosmetics is as old as necromancy, older than Egypt, as old as woman's desire to charm. Here the veil of history is lifted to reveal the toilette of a Pompeian beauty.

THE elegant Julia sat in her chamber, with her slaves around her. The wide door, which was glazed, alone admitted the morning rays; yet her eye, accustomed to a certain darkness, was sufficiently acute to perceive exactly what colors were the most becoming, what shade of the delicate rouge gave the brightest beam to her dark glance and the most youthful freshness to her cheek.

On the table, before which she sat, was a small and circular mirror of the most polished steel; round which, in precise order, were ranged the cosmetics and unguents, the perfumes and the paints, the jewels and the combs, the ribbons and the gold pins, which were destined to add to the natural attractions of beauty the assistance of art and the capricious allurements of fashion.

The fair Julia leaned indolently back while the hairdresser slowly piled, one above the other, a mass of small curls, dexterously weaving the false with the true, and carrying the whole fabric to a height that seemed to place the head at the center rather than the summit of the human form.

Her tunic of deep amber, which well set off her dark hair and somewhat imbrowned complexion, swept in ample folds to her feet, which were cased in slippers fastened round the slender ankle by white thongs; while a profusion of pearls were embroidered on the slipper itself, which was of purple, and turned slightly upward, as do the Turkish slippers of this day.

When the intricate tower was at length completed, the next preparation was of giving to the eyes the soft languish, produced by a black powder applied to the lids and brows; a small patch cut in the form of a crescent, skilfully placed by the rosy lips, attracted attention to their dimples, and to the teeth, to which already every art had been applied in order to heighten the dazzle of their natural whiteness.

To another slave, hitherto idle, was now consigned the charge of arranging the jewels: the earrings of pearl—two to each ear; the massive bracelets of gold; the chain formed of rings of the same metal, to which a talisman cut in crystals was attached; the graceful buckle on the left shoulder, in which was set an exquisite cameo of Psyche; the girdle of purple ribbon, richly wrought with threads of gold, and clasped by interlacing serpents; and lastly the various rings fitted to every joint of the white and slender fingers.

The toilet was now arranged, according to the latest mode of Rome.—*Bulwer-Lytton.*

by
O. Henry

*Author of
"The Voice of the City"*



*and Kings
"Cabbages"*

The MEMENTO

MISS LYNNETTE D'ARMANDE turned her back on Broadway. This was but it for tat, because Broadway had often done the same thing to Miss D'Armande. Still, the "tats" seemed to have it, for the ex-leading lady of the "Reaping the Whirlwind" company had everything to ask of Broadway, while there was no vice versa.

So Miss Lynnette D'Armande turned the back of her chair to her window that overlooked Broadway, and sat down to stitch in time the lisle-thread heel of a black silk stocking. The tumult and glitter of the roaring Broadway beneath her window had no charm for her; what she greatly desired was the stifling air of a dressing room on that fairyland street and the roar of an audience gathered in that capricious quarter. In the meantime, those stockings must not be neglected. Silk does wear out so, but—after all, isn't it just the only goods there is?

The Hotel Thalia looks on Broadway as Marathon looks on the sea. It stands like a gloomy cliff above the

whirlpool where the tides of two great thoroughfares clash. Here the player bands gather at the end of their wanderings, to loosen the buskin and dust the sock. Thick in the streets around it are booking offices, theaters, agents, schools, and the lobster palaces to which those thorny paths lead.

Wandering through the eccentric halls of the dim and fusty Thalia, you seem to have found yourself in some great ark or caravan about to sail, or fly, or roll away on wheels. About the house lingers a sense of unrest, of expectation, of transientness, even of anxiety and apprehension. The halls are a labyrinth. Without a guide, you wander like a lost soul in a Sam Lloyd puzzle.

Turning any corner, a dressing sack or a cul-de-sac may bring you up short. You meet alarming tragedians stalking in bath robes in search of rumored bath rooms. From hundreds of rooms come the buzz of talk, scraps of new and old songs, and the ready laughter of the convened players.

Summer has come; their companies

have disbanded, and they take their rest in their favorite caravansery, while they besiege the managers for engagements for the coming season.

At this hour of the afternoon the day's work of tramping the rounds of the agents' offices is over. Past you, as you ramble distractedly through the mossy halls, flit audible visions of houris, with veiled, starry eyes, flying tag ends of things, and a swish of silk, bequeathing to the dull hallways an odor of gayety and a memory of frangipanni. Serious young comedians, with versatile Adam's apples, gather in doorways and talk of Booth. Far-reaching from somewhere comes the smell of ham and red cabbage, and the crash of dishes on the American plan.

The indeterminate hum of life in the Thalia is punctuated by the discreet popping—at reasonable and salubrious intervals—of beer-bottle corks. Thus punctuated, life in the genial hostel scans easily—the comma being the favorite mark, semicolons frowned upon, and periods barred.

Miss D'Armande's room was a small one. There was room for her rocker between the dresser and the washstand if it were placed longitudinally. On the dresser were its usual accouterments, plus the ex-leading lady's collected souvenirs of road engagements and photographs of her dearest and best professional friends.

At one of these photographs she looked twice or thrice as she darned, and smiled friendly.

"I'd like to know where Lee is just this minute," she said, half aloud, with a pall-like smile.

If you had been privileged to view the photograph thus flattered, you would have thought at the first glance that you saw the picture of a many-petaled white flower, blown through the air by a storm. But the floral kingdom was not responsible for that swirl of petalous whiteness.

You saw the filmy, brief skirt of Miss Rosalie Ray as she made a complete heels-over-head turn in her wistaria-entwined swing, far out from the stage, high above the heads of the audience.

You saw the camera's inadequate representation of the graceful, strong kick, with which she, at this exciting moment, sent flying, high and far, the yellow silk garter that each evening spun from her agile toe and descended upon the delighted audience below.

You saw, too, amid the black-clothed, mainly masculine patrons of select vaudeville a hundred hands raised with the hope of staying the flight of the brilliant aerial token.

Forty weeks of the best circuits this act had brought Miss Rosalie Ray, for each of two years. She did other things during her twelve minutes—a song and dance, imitations of two or three actors who are but imitations of themselves, and a balancing feat with a stepladder and feather duster; but when the blossom-decked swing was let down from the flies, and Miss Rosalie sprang smiling into the seat, with the golden circlet conspicuous in the place whence it was soon to slide and become a soaring and coveted guerdon—then it was that the audience rose in its seat as a single man—or presumably so—and indorsed the specialty that made Miss Ray's name a favorite in the booking offices.

At the end of the two years Miss Ray suddenly announced to her dear friend, Miss D'Armande, that she was going to spend the summer at an antediluvian village on the north shore of Long Island, and that the stage would see her no more.

Seventeen minutes after Miss Lynnette D'Armande had expressed her wish to know the whereabouts of her old chum, there were sharp raps at her door.

Doubt not that it was Rosalie Ray. At the shrill command to enter she did so, with something of a tired flutter, and dropped a heavy hand bag on the floor. Upon my word, it was Rosalie, in a loose, travel-stained, automobileless coat, closely tied brown veil with yard-long, flying ends, gray walking suit and tan oxfords with lavender overgaiters.

When she threw off her veil and hat, you saw a pretty enough face, now flushed and disturbed by some unusual emotion, and restless, large eyes with

discontent marring their brightness. A heavy pile of dull auburn hair, hastily put up, was escaping in crinkly, waving strands and curling small locks, from the confining combs and pins.

The meeting of the two was not marked by the effusion vocal, gymnastical, osculatory and catechetical that distinguishes the greetings of their unprofessional sisters in society. There was a brief clinch, two simultaneous labial dabs and they stood on the same footing of the old days. Very much like the short salutations of soldiers or of travelers in foreign wilds are the welcomes between the strollers at the corners of their crisscross roads.

"I've got the hall room two flights up above yours," said Rosalie, "but I came straight to see you before going up. I didn't know you were here till they told me."

"I've been in since the last of April," said Lynnette. "And I'm going on the road with a 'Fatal Inheritance' company. We open next week in Elizabeth. I heard you'd quit the stage, Lee. Tell me about yourself."

Rosalie settled herself with a skillful wriggle on the top of Miss D'Armande's wardrobe trunk, and leaned her head against the papered wall. From long habit, thus can peripatetic leading ladies and their sisters make themselves as comfortable as though the deepest arm-chairs embraced them.

"I'm going to tell you, Lynn," she said, with a strangely sardonic and yet carelessly resigned look on her youthful face. "And then to-morrow I'll strike the old Broadway trail again, and wear some more paint off the chairs in the agents' offices. If anybody had told me any time in the last three months up to four o'clock this afternoon that I'd ever listen to that 'Leave-your-name-and-address' rot of the booking bunch again, I'd have given 'em the real Mrs. Fiske laugh. Loan me a handkerchief, Lynn. Gee! but those Long Island trains are fierce. I've got enough soft-coal cinders on my face to go on and play *Topsy* without using the cork. And, speaking of corks—got anything to drink, Lynn?"

Miss D'Armande opened a door of the washstand and took out a bottle.

"There's nearly a pint of Manhattan. There's a cluster of carnations in the drinking glass, but—"

"Oh, pass the bottle. Save the glass for company. Thanks! That hits the spot. The same to you. My first drink in three months!

"Yes, Lynn, I quit the stage at the end of last season. I quit it because I was sick of the life. And especially because my heart and soul were sick of men—of the kind of men we stage people have to be up against. You know what the game is to us—it's a fight against 'em all the way down the line, from the manager who wants us to try his new motor car to the bill posters who want to call us by our front names.

"And the men we have to meet after the show are the worst of all. The stage-door kind, and the manager's friends, who take us to supper, and show their diamonds and talk about seeing 'Dan' and 'Dave' and 'Charlie' for us. They're beasts, and I hate 'em.

"I tell you, Lynn, it's the girls like us on the stage that ought to be pitied. It's girls from good homes that are honestly ambitious, and work hard to rise in the profession, but never do get there. You hear a lot of sympathy sloshed around on chorus girls and their fifteen dollars a week. Piffle! There ain't a sorrow in the chorus that a lobster cannot heal.

"If there's any tears to shed, let 'em fall for the actress that gets a salary of from thirty to forty-five dollars a week for taking a leading part in a bum show. She knows she'll never do any better; but she hangs on for years, hoping for the 'chance' that never comes.

"And the fool plays we have to work in! Having another girl roll you around the stage by the hind legs in a 'Wheelbarrow Chorus' in a musical comedy is dignified drama compared with the idiotic things I've had to do in the thirty centers.

"But what I hated most was the men—the men leering and blathering at you across tables, trying to buy you with

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Würzberger or Extra Dry, according to their estimate of your price. And the men in the audiences, clapping, yelling, snarling, crowding, writhing, gloating—like a lot of wild beasts, with their eyes fixed on you, ready to eat you up if you come in reach of their claws. Oh, how I hate 'em!

"Well, I'm not telling you much about myself, am I, Lynn?"

"I had two hundred dollars saved up, and I cut the stage the first of the summer. I went over on Long Island and found the sweetest little village that ever was, called Soundport, right on the water. I was going to spend the summer there, and study up on elocution, and try to get a class in the fall. There was an old widow lady with a cottage near the beach who sometimes rented a room or two just for company, and she took me in. She had another boarder, too—the Reverend Arthur Lyle.

"Yes, he was the headliner. You're on, Lynn. I'll tell you all of it in a minute. It's only a one-act play.

"The first time he walked on, Lynn, I felt myself going; the first lines he spoke, he had me. He was different from the men in audiences. He was tall and slim, and you never heard him come in the room, but you *felt* him. He had a face like a picture of a knight—like one of that Round Table bunch—and a voice like a 'cello solo. And his manners!

"Lynn, if you'd take John Drew in his best drawing-room scene and compare the two you'd have John arrested for disturbing the peace.

"I'll spare you the particulars; but in less than a month Arthur and I were engaged. He preached at a little one-night stand of a Methodist church. There was to be a parsonage the size of a lunch wagon, and hens and honeysuckles when we were married. Arthur used to preach to me a good deal about heaven, but he never could get my mind quite off those honeysuckles and hens.

"No, I didn't tell him I'd been on the stage. I hated the business and all that

went with it; I'd cut it out forever, and I didn't see any use of stirring things up. I was a good girl, and I didn't have anything to confess, except being an elocutionist, and that was about all the strain my conscience would stand.

"Oh, I tell you, Lynn, I was happy. I sang in the choir and attended the sewing society, and recited that 'Annie Laurie' thing with the whistling stunt in it, 'in a manner bordering upon the professional,' as the weekly village paper reported it. And Arthur and I went rowing, and walking in the woods, and clamming, and that poky little village seemed to me the best place in the world. I'd have been happy to live there always, too, if—

"But one morning old Mrs. Gurley, the widow lady, got gossipy while I was helping her string beans on the back porch, and began to gush information, as folks who rent out their rooms usually do. Mr. Lyle was her idea of a saint on earth—as he was mine, too. She went over all his virtues and graces, and wound up by telling me that Arthur had had an extremely romantic love affair, not long before, that had ended unhappily. She didn't seem to be on to the details, but she knew that he had been hit pretty hard. He was paler and thinner, she said, and he had some kind of a remembrance or keepsake of the lady in a little rosewood box that he kept locked in his desk drawer in his study.

"'Several times,' says she, 'I've seen him gloomin' over that box of evenings, and he always locks it up right away if anybody comes into the room.'

"Well, you can imagine how long it was before I got Arthur by the wrist and led him down stage and hissed in his ear.

"That same afternoon we were lazying around in a boat among the water lilies at the edge of the bay.

"'Arthur,' says I, 'you never told me you'd had another love affair. But Mrs. Gurley did,' I went on, to let him know I knew. I hate to hear a man lie.

"'Before you came,' says he, looking me frankly in the eye, 'there was a

previous affection—a strong one. Since you know of it, I will be perfectly candid with you.

"I am waiting," says I.

"My dear Ida," says Arthur—of course I went by my real name, Ida Crosby, while I was in Soundport—"this former affection was a spiritual one, in fact. Although the lady aroused my deepest sentiments, and was, as I thought, my ideal woman, I never met her, and never spoke to her. It was an ideal love. My love for you, while no less ideal, is different. You wouldn't let that come between us."

"Was she pretty?" I asked.

"She was very beautiful," said Arthur.

"Did you see her often?" I asked.

"Something like half a dozen times," says he.

"Always from a distance?" says I.

"Always from quite a distance," says he.

"And you loved her?" I asked.

"She seemed my ideal of beauty and grace—and soul," says Arthur.

"And this keepsake that you keep under lock and key, and moon over at times, is that a remembrance from her?"

"A memento," says Arthur, "that I have treasured."

"Did she send it to you?"

"It came to me from her," says he.

"In a roundabout way?" I asked.

"Somewhat roundabout," says he, "and yet rather direct."

"Why didn't you ever meet her?" I asked. "Were your positions in life so different?"

"She was far above me," says Arthur. "Now, Ida," he goes on, "this is all of the past. You're not going to be jealous, are you?"

"Jealous!" says I. "Why, man, what are you talking about? It makes me think ten times as much of you as I did before I knew about it."

"And it did, Lynn—if you can understand it. That ideal love was a new one on me, but it struck me as being the most beautiful and glorious thing I'd ever heard of. Think of a man loving a woman he'd never even spoken to,

and being faithful just to what his mind and heart pictured her! Oh, it sounded great to me. The men I'd always known came at you with either diamonds, knock-out drops, or a raise of salary, and their ideals—well, we'll say no more.

"Yes, it made me think more of Arthur than I did before. I couldn't be jealous of that far-away divinity that he used to worship, for I was going to have him myself. And I began to look upon him as a saint on earth, just as old lady Gurley did.

"About four o'clock this afternoon a man came to the house for Arthur to go and see somebody that was sick among his church bunch. Old lady Gurley was taking her afternoon snore on a couch, so that left me pretty much alone.

"In passing by Arthur's study I looked in, and saw his bunch of keys hanging in the drawer of his desk where he'd forgotten 'em. Well, I guess we're all to the Mrs. Bluebeard now and then, ain't we, Lynn? I made up my mind I'd have a look at that memento he kept so secret. Not that I cared what it was—it was just curiosity.

"While I was opening the drawer I imagined one or two things it might be. I thought it might be a dried rosebud she'd dropped down to him from a balcony, or maybe a picture of her he'd cut out of a magazine, she being so high up in the world.

"I opened the drawer, and there was the rosewood casket about the size of a gent's collar box. I found the little key in the bunch that fitted it, and unlocked it and raised the lid.

"I took one look at that memento, and then I went to my room and packed my trunk. I threw a few things into my grip, gave my hair a flirt or two with a side comb, put on my hat, and went in and gave the old lady's foot a kick. I'd tried awfully hard to use proper and correct language while I was there for Arthur's sake, and I had the habit down pat, but it left me then.

"Stop sawing gourds," says I, "and sit up and take notice. The ghost's

about to walk. I'm going away from here, and I owe you eight dollars. The expressman will call for my trunk.'

"I handed her the money.

"Dear me, Miss Crosby!" says she. "Is anything wrong? I thought you were pleased here. Dear me, young women are so hard to understand, and so different from what you expect 'em to be."

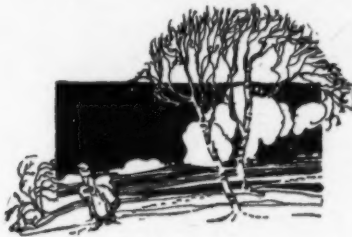
"You're right," says I. "Some of 'em are. But you can't say that about men. *When you know one man you know 'em*

all! That settles the human-race question."

"And then I caught the four thirty-eight, soft-coal unlimited; and here I am."

"You didn't tell me what was in the box, Lee," said Miss D'Armande anxiously.

"One of those yellow-silk garters that I used to kick off my leg into the audience during that old swing, vaudeville act of mine. Is there any of the cocktail left, Lynn?"



NO!

NO sun—no moon!
 No morn—no noon—
 No dawn—no dusk—no proper time of day—
 No sky—no earthly view—
 No distance looking blue—
 No road—no street—no "t'other side the way"—
 No end to any Row—
 No indications where the Crescents go—
 No top to any steeple—
 No recognitions of familiar people—
 No courtesies for showing 'em—
 No knowing 'em!
 No traveling at all—no locomotion—
 No inkling of the way—no notion—
 "No go"—by land or ocean—
 No mail—no post—
 No news from any foreign coast—
 No park—no ring—no afternoon gentility—
 No company—no nobility—
 No warmth, no cheerfulness, no healthful ease,
 No comfortable feel in any member—
 No shade, no shine, no butterflies, no bees,
 No fruits, no flowers, no leaves, no birds,
 November!

Thomas Hood.

A Three Part Story... Part I
by **May Sinclair**

Author of

A Cure of Soul



The
Immortal Moment

CHAPTER I.

THEY came into the hotel dining room like young persons making their first entry into life. They carried themselves with an air of subdued audacity, of innocent inquiry. When the great doors opened to them they stood still on the threshold, charmed, expectant. There was the magic of quest, of pure, unspoiled adventure, in their very efforts to catch the head waiter's eye. It was as if they called from its fantastic dwelling place the attendant spirit of delight.

You could never have guessed how old they were. He, at thirty-five, had preserved by some miracle his alert and slender adolescence. In his brown clean-shaven face, keen with pleasure, you saw the clear, serious eyes and the adorable smile of seventeen. She, at thirty, had kept the wide eyes and tender mouth of childhood. Her face had a child's immortal, spiritual appeal.

They were charming with each other. You might have taken them for bride and bridegroom, his absorption in her was so unimpaired. But their names in the visitors' book stood as Mr. Robert Lucy and Miss Jane Lucy. They were

brother and sister. You gathered it from something absurdly alike in their faces, something profound and racial and enduring.

For they combined it all, the youth, the abandonment, the innocence, with an indomitable distinction.

They made their way with easy, unembarrassed movements, and seated themselves at a table by an open window. They bent their brows together over the menu. The head waiter, who had flown at last to their high summons, made them his peculiar care, and they turned to him with the helplessness of children. He told them what things they would like, what things—he seemed to say—would be good for them. And when he went away with their order they looked at each other and laughed, softly and instantaneously.

They had done the right thing. They both said it at the same moment, smiling triumphantly into each other's face. Southbourne was exquisite in young June, at the dawn of its season. And the Cliff Hotel promised what they wanted, a gay seclusion, a refined publicity.

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the big Hotel Metropole, opposite. If you were a person of fastidious tastes and an attenuated income you felt the superior charm of the Cliff Hotel. The little house, the joy of its proprietor, was hidden in the privacy of its own beautiful grounds, having its back to the highroad and its face to the open sea. They had taken stock of it that morning with its clean walls, white as the cliff it stood on, its bay windows, its long green-roofed veranda, looking south, its sharp, slated roofs and gables, all sheltered by the folding downs.

They didn't know which of them had first suggested Southbourne. Probably they had both thought of it at the same moment, as they were thinking now. But it was she who had voted for the Cliff Hotel in preference to lodgings. She thought that in an hotel there would be more scope, more chance, don't you know, of things happening.

Jane was always on the lookout for things happening. He saw her now, with her happy eyes and her little tilted nose, sniffing the air, scanning the horizon.

He knew Jane and her adventures well. They were purely, pathetically vicarious. Jane was the thrall of her own sympathy. So was he. At a hint she was off, and he after her, on wild paths of inference, on perilous oceans of conjecture. Only he moved more slowly; and he knew the end of it. He had seen, before now, her joyous leap to land, on shores of manifest disaster. He protested against that jumping to conclusions. He, for his part, took conclusions in his stride.

But Jane was always listening for a call from some foreign country of the soul. She was always entering surreptitiously into other people's feelings. They never caught her at it, never suspected her soft-footed, innocent intrusions.

She was wondering now whether they would have to make friends with any of the visitors. She hoped not because that would spoil it, the adventure. People had a way of telling her their secrets, and Jane preferred not to be

told. All she wanted was an inkling, a clew; the slenderer the better.

The guests, as yet assembled, were not conspicuously interesting.

There was a clergyman dining gloomily at a table by himself. There was a gray group of middle-aged ladies next to him. There were Colonel Hankin and his wife. They had arrived with the Lucys in the hotel bus and their names were entered above Robert's in the visitors' book. They marked him with manifest approval as one of themselves, and they looked all pink perfection and silver-white propriety. There was the old lady who did nothing but knit. She had arrived in a fly, knitting. She was knitting now, between the courses. When she caught sight of the Lucys she smiled at them over her knitting. They had found her, before dinner, with her feet entangled in a skein of worsted. Jane had shown tenderness in disentangling her.

It was almost as if they had made friends already.

Jane's eyes roamed and lighted on a fat, wine-faced man. Robert saw them. He teased her, challenged her. She didn't think, did she, she could do anything with him?

No. Jane thought not. He wasn't interesting. There was nothing that you could take hold of, except that he seemed to be very fond of wine, poor old thing. But then, you had to be fond of something, and perhaps it was his only weakness. What did Robert think?

Robert did not hear her. He was bending forward, looking beyond her, across the room toward the great doors. They had swung open again, with a flash of their glass panels, to give passage to a lady.

She came slowly, with the irresistible motion of creatures that divide and trouble the medium in which they move. The white, painted wainscot behind her showed her small eager head, its waving rolls and crowning heights of hair, black as her gown. She had a sweet face, curiously foreshortened by a low forehead and the briefest of chins. It

was white with the same whiteness as her neck, her shoulders, her arms; a whiteness pure and profound. This face she kept thrust a little forward, while her eyes looked round, steadily, deliberately, for the place where she desired to be. She carried on her arm a long tippet of brown fur. It slipped, and her effort to recover it brought her to a standstill.

The large white room, half empty at this season, gave her up bodily to what seemed to Lucy the intolerable impudence of the public gaze.

She was followed by an older lady who had the air of making her way with difficulty and vexation through an unpleasantly crowded space. This lady was somewhat oddly attired in a white dress, cut high with a Puritan intention, but otherwise indiscreetly youthful. She kept close to the tail of her companion's gown, and tracked its charming evolutions with an irritated eye. Her whole aspect was evidently a protest against the publicity she was compelled to share.

Lucy was not interested in her. He was watching the lady in black who was now standing in the middle of the room. Her elbow touched the shoulder of a young man on her left. The fur tippet slipped again and lay at the young man's feet. He picked it up, and as he handed it to her he stared into her face, and sleeked his little mustache above a furtive, objectionable smile. His companion—Jane's uninteresting man—roused from communion with the spirit of *Veuve Cliquot*, fixed on the lady a pair of bloodshot eyes in a brutal wine-dark face.

She stood there, strangely still, it seemed to Lucy, before the pitiless stare that went up, right and left, to her appealing face. She was looking, it seemed to him, for her refuge.

She moved forward. The colonel, pinker than ever in his perfection, lowered his eyes as she approached. She paused again in her progress beside the clergyman on her right. He looked severely at her as much as to say: "Madam, if you drop that thing in my

neighborhood I shall not attempt to pick it up."

An obsequious waiter pointed out a table next to the middle-aged ladies. She shook her head at the middle-aged ladies. She turned in her course, and her eyes met Lucy's.

He said something to his sister. Jane rose and changed her seat, thus clearing the way to a table that stood beside theirs, empty, secluded in the bay of the window.

The lady in black came swiftly, as if to the place of her desire. The glance that expressed her gratitude went from Lucy to Jane and from Jane to Lucy, and rested on him for a moment.

As the four grouped themselves at their respective tables, the lady in white, seated with her back to the window, commanded a front and side view of Jane. The lady in black sat facing Lucy.

She put her elbows on the table and turned her face—her profile was remarkably pretty—to her companion.

"Well," said she, "don't you want to sit here?"

"Oh," said the older woman, "what does it matter where we sit?"

She spoke in a small crowing voice, the voice, Lucy said to herself, of a rather terrible person. She shivered.

"Poor lamb, does it feel a draft down its little back?"

The lady rose and put her fur tippet on the shivering shoulders. They shrank from her, and she drew it closer and fastened it with caressing and cajoling fingers. There was about her something impetuous and perverse, a willful, ungovernable tenderness. Her hands had the swiftness of things moved by sweet disastrous impulses.

The white person—she was quite terrible—undid the fastening and shook her shoulders free of the fur. It slid to the floor for the third time.

Lucy rose from his place, picked up the fur and restored it to its owner.

The quite terrible person flushed with vexation.

"You see," said the lady, "the trouble you've given that nice man."

"Oh, don't, he'll hear you."

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"If he does he won't mind," said the lady.

He did hear her. It was difficult not to hear, not to look at her, not to be interested in every movement that she made. Her charm, however, was powerless over her companion.

Their voices, to Lucy's relief, sank low. Then suddenly the companion spoke.

"Of course," said she, "if you *want* all the men to look at you——"

Lucy looked no more. He heard the lady draw in her breath with a soft sharp sound, and he felt his blood running scarlet to the roots of his hair.

"I believe"—the older lady spoke almost vindictively—"you like it."

The head waiter, opportune in all his approaches, brought coffee at that moment. Lucy turned his chair slightly, so that he presented his back to the speaker, and to the lady in black his side-face, shaded by his hand, conspicuously penitential.

Jane tried to set everybody at their ease by talking in a clear, cool voice about the beautiful decorations, the perfect management of the hotel. The two drank their coffee hastily and left the table. In the doorway Lucy drew the head waiter aside.

"Who," said he, "is the lady in the window?"

"The lady in the window, sir? Miss Keating, sir."

"I mean—the old lady."

The head waiter looked reproachfully at Lucy and apologetically at Jane.

"The lady in black, sir? You want to know her name?"

"Yes."

"Her name, sir, is Mrs. Tailleux."

His manner intimated respectfully that Lucy would not like Mrs. Tailleux, and that, if he did, she would not be good for him.

The brother and sister went out into the hotel garden. They strolled up and down the cool green lawns that overhung the beach.

Lucy smoked and was silent.

"Jane," he said presently, "could you see what she did?"

"I was just going," said Jane, "to ask you that."

"Upon my soul, I can't see it," said he.

"Nor I," said Jane.

"Could you see what I did?"

"What you did?"

"Yes, I. Did I look at her?"

"Well, yes, certainly—you looked at her."

"And you think she minded?"

"No. I don't think she minded very much."

"Come—she couldn't have liked it, could she?"

"I don't know. I don't think she noticed it. You see"—Jane was off on the adventure—"she's in mourning for her husband. He has been dead about two years. He wasn't very kind to her, and she doesn't know whether to be glad or sorry he's dead. She's unhappy, and afraid."

"I say, how do you know all that?"

"I know," said Jane, "because I see it in her face. And in her clothes. I always see things."

He laughed at that.

CHAPTER II.

They talked a long time as they paced the green lawns, linked arm in arm, keeping their own path fastidiously.

Miss Keating, Mrs. Tailleux's companion, watched them from her seat on the veranda.

She had made her escape from the great lighted lounge behind her where the men were sitting. She had found a corner out of sight of its wide windows. She knew that Kitty Tailleux was in there, somewhere. She could hear her talking to the men. At the other end of the veranda the old lady sat with her knitting. From time to time she looked up over her needles and glanced curiously at Miss Keating.

On the lawn below Colonel Hankin walked with his wife. They kept the same line as the Lucys, so that, in rhythmic instants, the couples made one group. There was an affinity, a harmony in their movements as they approached each other. They were all ob-

viciously nice people, people who belonged by right to the same group, who might approach each other without any impropriety.

Miss Keating wondered how long it would be before Kitty Tailleir would approach Mr. Lucy. That afternoon, on her arrival, she had approached the colonel, and the colonel had got up and gone away. Kitty had then laughed. Miss Keating suspected her of a similar social intention with regard to the younger man. She knew his name. She had looked it up in the visitors' book. She was always looking up people's names. She had made with determination for the table next to him. Miss Keating, in the dawn of their acquaintance, had prayed that Mrs. Tailleir might not elect to sit next any one who was not nice. Latterly, she had found herself hoping that their place might not be in view of anybody who was.

For three months they had been living in hotels, in horrifying publicity. Miss Keating dreaded most the hour they had just passed through. There was something terrible to her in their entry, in their passage down the great white, palm-shaded, exotic room, their threading of the ways between the tables, with all the men turning round to stare at Kitty Tailleir. It was all very well for Kitty to pretend that she saved her by thus diverting and holding fast the public eyes. Miss Keating felt that the tail of it flicked her unpleasantly as she followed in that troubled, luminous wake.

It had not been quite so unbearable in Brighton at Easter, when the big hotels were crowded, and Mrs. Tailleir was not so indomitably conspicuous. Or else Miss Keating had not been so painfully alive to her. But Southbourne was half empty in early June, and the Cliff Hotel, small as it was, had room for the perfect exhibition of Mrs. Tailleir. It gave her wide polished spaces, and clean brilliant backgrounds, yards of parquetry for the gliding of her feet and monstrous mirrors for reflecting her face at unexpected angles. These distances fined her grace still

finer, and lent her a certain pathos, the charm of figures vanishing and remote.

Not that you could think of Kitty Tailleir as in the least remote or vanishing. She seemed to be always approaching, to hover imminently and dangerously near.

Mr. Lucy looked fairly unapproachable. His niceness, Miss Keating imagined, would keep him linked arm in arm with his sister, maintaining, unconsciously, inoffensively, his distance and distinction. He would manage better than the colonel. He wouldn't have to get up and go away. So Miss Keating thought.

From the lounge, behind the veranda, Kitty's voice came to her again. Kitty was excited and her voice went winged. It flew upward, touched a perilous height and shook there. It hung, on its delicate feminine wings, dominating the male voices that contended brutally below. Now and then it found its lyric mate, a high, adolescent voice that followed it with frenzy, that broke pitifully, in sharp abominable laughter, like a cry of pain.

Miss Keating shut her eyes to keep out her vision of Kitty's face with the look it wore when her voice went high.

She was roused by the waiter bringing coffee. Kitty Tailleir had come out on the veranda. She was pouring out Grace Keating's coffee and talking to her in another voice, the one that she kept for children and for animals and for all diminutive and helpless things. She was saying that Miss Keating, whom she called "Bunny," was a dear little white rabbit and she wanted to stroke her.

"You see, you are so very small," said Kitty, as she dropped sugar into Miss Keating's cup. She had ordered cigarettes and a liqueur for herself.

Miss Keating said nothing. She drank her coffee with a distasteful movement of her lips.

Kitty Tailleir stretched herself at full length on a garden chair. She watched her companion with eyes secretly, profoundly intent under lowered lids.

"Do you mind my smoking?" she said presently.

"No," said Miss Keating.

"Do you mind my drinking kum-mel?"

"No."

"Do you mind my showing seven inches of stocking?"

"No."

"What do you mind, then?"

"I mind your making yourself so very conspicuous."

"I don't make myself conspicuous. I was born so."

"You make me conspicuous. Goodness knows what all these people take us for."

"Holy Innocent, as long as you sit tight and do your hair like that, nobody could take you for anything but a dear little bunny with its ears laid back. But if you get palpitations in your little nose, and turn up your little white tail at people, and scuttle away when they look at you, you can't blame them if they wonder what's the matter with you."

"With me?"

"Yes. It's you who give the show away." Kitty smiled into her liqueur glass. "It doesn't seem to strike you that your behavior compromises me."

Miss Keating's mouth twitched. Her narrow, rather prominent front teeth lifted an instant, and then closed sharply on her lower lip. Her throat trembled as if she were swallowing some bitter thing that had been on the tip of her tongue.

"If you think that," she said and her voice crowed no longer, "wouldn't it be better for us not to be together?"

Kitty shook her meditative head. "Poor Bunny," said she, "why can't you be honest? Why don't you say plump out that you're sick and tired of me? I should be. I couldn't stand another woman lugging me about as I lug you."

"It isn't *that*. Only—everywhere we go—there's always some horrible man."

"Everywhere you go, dear lamb, there always will be."

"Yes. But one doesn't have anything to do with them."

"I don't have anything to do with them."

"You talk to them."

"Of course I do," said Kitty. "Why not?"

"You don't know them."

"H'm! If you never talk to people you don't know, pray, how do you get to know them?"

Kitty sat up and began playing with the matches till she held a bunch of them blazing in her hand. She was blowing out the flame as the Hankins came up the steps of the veranda. They had a smile for the old lady in her corner, and for Miss Keating a look of wonder and curiosity and pity; but they turned from Mrs. Tailleux with guarded eyes.

"What do you bet," said Kitty, "that I don't make that long man there come and talk to me."

"If you do——"

"I'll do it before you count ten. One, two, three, four—I shall ask him for a light——"

"Sh-sh! He's coming."

Kitty slid her feet to the floor and covered them with her skirt. Then she looked down, fascinated, apparently, by the shining tips of her shoes. You could have drawn a straight line from her feet to the feet of the man coming up the lawn.

"Five, six, seven——" Kitty lit her last match. "T—t! The jamfounded thing's gone out."

The long man's sister came up the steps of the veranda. The long man followed her, slowly, with deliberate pauses in his stride.

"Eight, nine," said Kitty under her breath. She waited.

The man's eyes had been upon her; but in the approach he lowered them; and as he passed her he turned away his head.

"It's no use," said Miss Keating. "You can't have it both ways."

Kitty was silent.

Suddenly she laughed. "Bunny," said she, "would you like to marry the long man?"

Miss Keating's mouth closed tightly, with an effort, covering her teeth.

Kitty leaned forward. "Perhaps you can if you want to. Long men sometimes go crazy about little women. And you'd have such dear little long babies—little babies with long faces—why not? You're just the right size for him. He could make a memorandum of you and put you in his pocket; or you could hang on his arm like a dear little umbrella. It would be all right. You may take it from me that man is entirely moral. He wouldn't think of going out without an umbrella. And he'd be so nice when the little umbrellas came— Dear Bunny, face massage would do wonders for you! Why ever not? He's heaps nicer than that man at the Hydro, and you'd have married him, you know you would, if I hadn't told you he was a commercial traveler. Never mind, ducky. I dare say he wasn't."

Kitty curled herself up tight on the long-chair and smiled dreamily at Miss Keating.

"Do you remember the way you used to talk at Matlock, just after I found you there? You *were* such a rum little thing. You said it would be very much better if we hadn't any bodies, so that people could fall in love in a prettier way and only be married spiritually. You said God ought to have arranged things on that footing. You looked so miserable when you said it. By the way, I wouldn't go about saying that sort of thing to people. That's how I spotted you. I know men think it's one of the signs."

"Signs of what?"

"Of that state of mind. When a woman comes to me, and talks about being spiritual, I always know she isn't—at the moment. You asked me, Bunny—the second time I met you—if I believed in spiritual love, and all that. I didn't and I don't. When you're gone on a man, all you want is to get him, and keep him to yourself. I dare say it feels jolly spiritual—especially when you're not sure of the man—but it isn't. If you're gone on him enough to give him up when you've got him, there might be some spirituality in *that*. I shall believe in it when I see it done."

"Seriously," she continued, "if you'd been married, Bunny, you wouldn't have had half such a beastly time. You're one of those leaning, clinging little women who require a strong, safe man to support them. You ought to be married."

Miss Keating smiled a little sad spiritual smile and said that was the last thing she wanted.

"Well," said Kitty. "I didn't say it was the first."

Kitty's smile was neither sad nor spiritual. She uncurling herself, got up, and stood over her companion, stroking her sleek thin hair.

Miss Keating purred under the caress. She held up her hand to Kitty who took it and gave it a squeeze before she let it go.

"Poor Bunny! Nice Bunny!" she said as if Miss Keating were an animal. She stretched out her arms, turned, and disappeared through the lounge into the billiard room.

CHAPTER III.

It could not be denied that Kitty had a charm. Miss Keating was not denying it, even now, when she was saying to herself that Kitty had a way of attracting very disagreeable attention.

At first she had supposed that this was an effect of Kitty's charm, disagreeable to Kitty. Then, even in the beginning, she had seen that there was something deliberate and perpetual in Kitty's challenge of the public eye. The public eye, so far from pursuing Kitty, was itself pursued, tracked down and captured. Kitty couldn't let it go. Publicity was what Kitty coveted.

She had then supposed that Kitty was used to it; that she was, in some mysterious way, a personage. There would be temptations, she had imagined, for any one who had a charm that lived thus in the public eye.

And Kitty had her good points, too. There was nobody so easy to live with as Kitty in her private capacity, if she could be said to have one. She never wanted to be amused, or read to, or sat up with late at night, like the opulent

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invalids Miss Keating had been with hitherto. Miss Keating owed everything she had to Kitty, her health—she was constitutionally anæmic—her magnificent salary, the luxurious gayety in which they lived and moved—moved, perhaps, rather more than lived. The very combs in her hair were Kitty's. So were the gowns she wore on occasions of splendor and display. It struck her as odd that they were all public, these occasions—things they paid to go to.

It had dawned on her by this time, coldly, disagreeably, that Kitty Tailleleur was nobody—nobody, that is to say, in particular. A person of no account in the places where they had stayed. In their three months' wanderings they had never been invited to any private house. Miss Keating could not account for that air of ill-defined celebrity that hung round Kitty like a scent, and marked her trail.

Not that any social slur seemed to attach to Kitty. The acquaintances she had made in her brief and curious fashion were all, or nearly all, socially immaculate. The friends—they were all men—who came to her of their own intimate accord, belonged, some of them, to an aristocracy higher than that represented by Mr. Lucy or the colonel. And they had been by no means impervious to Kitty's charm.

From the sounds that came from the billiard room she gathered that Kitty's charm appealed also to her audience in there. Leaning her body forward so as to listen, Miss Keating became aware that Lucy had returned to the lounge and was strolling about in it, as if he were looking for somebody. He strolled into the veranda.

The garden was dark now, but a little light fell on the veranda from the open windows of the lounge. Lucy looked at Mrs. Tailleleur's empty chair. He was about to sit in it when he saw that he was alone with Mrs. Tailleleur's companion. He rose again for flight. Miss Keating rose also with the same intention.

Lucy protested. "Please don't let me disturb you. I am not going to sit here."

"But I am driving you in."

"Not at all. I only thought you might object to my smoking."

"But I don't object."

"You don't, really?"

"If I stay," said she, "will that prove it?"

"Please do," said Lucy.

Miss Keating pushed her chair as far as possible from his. She seated herself with a fugitive, sidelong movement; as much as to say she left him to the sanctuary he sought. He would please to observe the perfection of her withdrawal. The table with the match-stand on it stood between them.

Lucy approached the match-stand tentatively. Miss Keating, averted and effaced, was yet aware of him.

"I'm afraid there are no matches," said she. "Mrs. Tailleleur has used them all." So effaced and so averted was Miss Keating that there was nothing left of her but a sweet, attenuated, disembodied voice. It was as if spirit spoke to spirit with the consecrated doors between.

Lucy smiled. He paused at Mrs. Tailleleur's chair.

"Is your friend coming back again?" he asked.

"I don't think so."

It might have been an effect of her remoteness, but Miss Keating's tone conveyed to him ever so slight a repudiation of Mrs. Tailleleur.

He seated himself. As he did so, he searched his coat pockets. There were no matches there. He knew he would find some in the lounge. Perhaps he might find Mrs. Tailleleur also. He would get up and look.

Miss Keating, still disembodied, rose and withdrew herself completely, and Lucy thought better of his intention. He lay back and closed his eyes.

A light tap on the table roused him. It was Miss Keating laying down a match box. He saw her hand poised yet in the delicacy of its imperceptible approach.

He stared, stupefied with embarrassment. He stuttered with it. "Really—I—I—I wish you hadn't." He did not take up the match box all at once, lest

he should seem prompt in accepting this rather extraordinary service.

Mrs. Tailleux's companion slid back into her seat and sat there smiling to herself and to the incommunicative night.

"I hope," she said presently, "you are not refraining from smoking because of me."

She was very sweet and soft and gentle. But she had not struck him as gentle or soft or sweet when he had seen her with Mrs. Tailleux, and he was not prepared to take that view of her now.

"Thank you," he said. He couldn't think of anything else to say. He lit his cigarette and smoked in an innocent abstraction.

A clock indoors struck ten. Miss Keating accounted for her continuance. "It is the only quiet place in the hotel," said she.

He assented, wondering if this were meant for a conversational opening.

"And the night air is so very sweet and pure."

"I'm afraid you find this smoke of mine anything but——"

"If you are so serious about it," said she, "I shall be afraid either to stay out or to go in."

If there were any opening there he missed it. He had turned at the sound of a skirt trailing, and he saw that Mrs. Tailleux had come back into the lounge. He was thoughtful for a moment. Then he got up quietly and went in.

He did not speak to her or look at her. He sat very still in a corner of the room where he could see her reflection in a big mirror. It did not occur to him that Mrs. Tailleux could see his, too.

Outside, in the veranda, Miss Keating sat shuddering in the night air.

CHAPTER IV.

Lucy's mind was like his body. Superficial people called it narrow because the sheer length of it diverted their attention from its breadth. Visionary, yet eager for the sound impact of the visible, it was never more alert than when

it, so to speak, sat still, absorbed in its impressions. It was the sport of young and rapid impulses, which it seemed to obey sluggishly, while, all the time, it moved with immense slow strides to incredibly far conclusions. Having reached a conclusion it was apt to stay there. The very length of its stride made turning awkward for it.

He had reached a conclusion now, on his third night in Southbourne. He must do something, he did not yet know what, for the protection of Mrs. Tailleux.

Her face was an appeal to the chivalry that sat quiet in Lucy's heart, nursing young dreams of opportunity.

Lucy's chivalry had been formed by three weeks of courtship and three years of wedded incompatibility. The incompatibility had hardly dawned on him when his wife died. Three years were too short a space for Lucy's mind to turn in; and so he always thought of her tenderly as "dear little Amy." She had given him two daughters and paid for the younger with her life.

Five years of fatherhood finished his training in the school of chivalry. He had been profoundly moved by little Amy's sacrifice to the powers of life, and he was further touched by the heartrending spectacle of Jane. Jane doing all she knew for him; Jane so engaging in her innocence, hiding her small childlike charm under dark airs of assumed maternity; Jane, whose skirts fluttered wide to all the winds of dream; Jane with an apron on and two little girls tied to the strings of it; Jane, adorable in disaster, striving to be discreet and comfortable and competent.

He had a passionate pity for all creatures troubled and unfortunate. And Mrs. Tailleux's face called aloud to him for pity. For Lucy Mrs. Tailleux's face wore, like a veil, the shadow of the incredible past and of the future; it was reminiscent and prophetic of terrible and tragic things. Across the great spaces of the public rooms his gaze answered her call. Then Mrs. Tailleux's face would become dumb. Like all hurt things, she was manifestly shy of observation and pursuit.

Pursuit and observation, perpetual, implacable, were what she had to bear. The women had driven her from the drawing-room; the men made the smoke room impossible. A cold, wet mist came with the evenings. It lay over the sea and drenched the lawns of the hotel garden. Mrs. Tailleir had no refuge but the lounge.

To-night the wine-faced man and his companion had tracked her there. Mrs. Tailleir had removed herself from the corner where they had hemmed her in. She had found an unoccupied sofa near the writing table. The pursuer was seized, instantly, with a desire to write letters. Mrs. Tailleir went out and shivered on the veranda. His eyes followed her. In passing she had turned her back on the screened hearthplace where Lucy and his sister sat alone.

"Did you see that?" said Lucy.

"I did, indeed," said Jane.

"It's awful that a woman should be exposed to that sort of thing. What can her people be thinking of?"

"Her people?"

"Yes. To let her go about alone."

"I go about alone," said Jane pensively.

"Yes. But she's so good looking."

"Am I not?"

"You're all right, Jenny. But you never looked like that. There's something about her——"

"Is that what makes those men horrid to her?"

"Yes, I suppose so. The brutes!" He paused irritably. "It mustn't happen again."

"What's the poor lady to do?" said Jane.

"She can't do anything. *We* must."

"We——"

"I must. You must. Go out to her, Janey, and be nice to her."

"No. You go and say I sent you."

He strode out on to the veranda. Mrs. Tailleir sat with her hands in her lap, motionless, and, to his senses, unaware.

"Mrs. Tailleir——"

She started and looked up at him.

"My sister asked me to tell you that

there's a seat for you in there, if you don't mind sitting with us."

"But—won't you mind me?"

"Not—not," said Lucy—he positively stammered—"not if you don't mind us."

Mrs. Tailleir looked at him again, wide-eyed, with the strange and pitiful candor of distrust. Then she smiled, incomprehensibly.

Her eyelids dropped as she slid past him to the seat beside Jane. He noticed that she had the sudden, furtive ways of the wild thing aware of the hunter.

"May I, really?" said Mrs. Tailleir.

"Oh, please," said Jane.

As she spoke, the man at the writing table looked up and stared. Not at Mrs. Tailleir, this time, but at Jane. He stared with a wonder so spontaneous, so supreme, that it purged him of offense.

He stared again—with less innocence—at Lucy as the young man gave way, reverently, to the sweep of Mrs. Tailleir's gown. Lucy's face intimated to him that he had made a bad mistake. The wretch admitted, by a violent flush, that it was possible. Then his eyes turned again to Mrs. Tailleir. It was as much as to say he had only been relying on the incorruptible evidence of his senses.

Mrs. Tailleir sat down and breathed hard.

"How sweet of you." Her voice rang with the labor of her breast.

Lucy smiled as he caught the word. He would have condemned the stress of it, but that Mrs. Tailleir's voice pleaded forgiveness for any word she chose to utter. "Even," he said to himself, "if you could forget her face."

He couldn't forget it. As he sat there, trying to read, it came between him and his book. It tormented him to find its meaning. Kitty's face was a thing both delicate and crude. When she was gay it showed a blurred edge, a fineness in peril. When she was sad it wore the fixed look of artificial maturity. It was like a young bud opened by inquisitive fingers and forced to be a flower. Some day, the day before it withered, the bruised veins would glow

again and a hectic spot betray, like a bruise, the violation of its bloom. At the moment, repose gave back its beauty to Kitty's face. Lucy noticed that the large black pupils of her eyes were ringed with a dark-blue iris, spotted with black. There was no color about her at all, except that blue, and the delicate red of her mouth. In her black gown she was a revelation of pure form. Color would have obscured her, made her ineffectual.

He sat silent, hardly daring to look at her. So keen was his sense of her that he could almost have heard the beating of her breast against her gown. Once she sighed and Lucy stirred. Once she stirred slightly, and Lucy, unconsciously responsive, sighed. Then Kitty's glance lit on him. He turned a page of his book ostentatiously and Kitty's glance slunk home again. She closed her eyes and opened them to find Lucy's eyes looking at her over the top of his book. Poor Lucy was so perturbed at being detected in that particular atrocity that he rose, drew his chair to the hearth, and arranged himself in an attitude that made these things impossible.

He was presently aware of Jane launching herself on a gentle tide of conversation and of Mrs. Tailleir trembling pathetically on the brink.

"Do you like Southbourne?" he heard Jane saying.

Then suddenly Mrs. Tailleir plunged in.

"No," said she. "I hate it. I hate any place I have to be alone in, if it's only for five minutes."

Lucy felt that it was Jane who drew back now, in sheer distress. He tried to think of something to say and gave it up, stultified by his compassion.

The silence was broken by Jane.

"Robert," said she, "have you written to the children?"

Mrs. Tailleir's face became suddenly somber and intent.

"No. I haven't. I clean forgot it."

He went off to write his letter. When he came back Mrs. Tailleir had risen and was saying good night to Jane.

He followed her to the portière and drew it back for her to pass. As she

turned to thank him, she glanced up at the hand that held the portière. It trembled violently. Her eyes, a moment ago dark under her bent forehead, darted a sudden light sidelong.

She paused, interrogative, expectant. Lucy bowed.

As Mrs. Tailleir passed out she looked back over her shoulder, smiling again her incomprehensible smile.

The portière dropped behind her.

CHAPTER V.

Five days passed. The Lucys had now been a week at Southbourne. They knew it well by that time, for bad weather kept them from going very far beyond it. Jane had found, too, that they had to know some of the visitors. The little Cliff Hotel brought its guests together with a geniality unknown to its superb rival, the Metropole. Under its roof, in bad weather, persons not otherwise incompatible became acquainted with extraordinary rapidity. People had begun already to select each other. Even Mr. Soutar, the clergyman, had emerged from his lonely gloom, and dined by preference at the same table with the middle-aged ladies—the table farthest from the bay window. The Hankins, out of pure kindness, had taken pity on the old lady, Mrs. Jurd. They had made advances to the Lucys, perceiving an agreeable social affinity, and had afterward drawn back. For the Lucys were using the opportunity of the weather for cultivating Mrs. Tailleir.

It was not easy, they told themselves, to get to know her. She didn't talk much. But as Jane pointed out to Robert, little things came out, things that proved that she was all right. Her father was a country parson, very strait-laced, they gathered; and she had little sisters, years younger than herself. When she talked at all, it was in a pretty, innocent way like a child's, and all her little legends were, you could see, transparently consistent. They had, like a child's, a quite funny reticence and simplicity. But, like a child, she was easily put off by any sort

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of interruption. When she thought she had let herself go too far she would take fright and avoid them for the rest of the day, and they had to begin all over again with her next time.

The thing, Lucy said, would be for Jane to get her some day all alone. But Jane said: No, Mrs. Tailleir was ten times more afraid of her than of him. Besides, they had only another week, and they didn't want, did they, to see too much of Mrs. Tailleir? At that Lucy got very red and promised his sister to take her out somewhere by themselves the next fine day.

That was on Wednesday evening, when it was raining hard.

The weather lifted with the dawn. The heavy smell of the wet earth was pierced by the fine air of heaven and the sea.

Jane Lucy leaned out of her bedroom window and looked eastward beyond the hotel garden to the cliff. The sea was full of light. Light rolled on the low waves and broke on their tops like foam. It hung quivering on the white face of the cliff. It was like a thin spray thrown from the heaving light of the sea.

At breakfast Jane reminded Robert of his promise to take her for a sail on the first fine day. They turned their backs on the hotel and went seaward. On their way to the boats they passed Mrs. Tailleir sitting on the beach in the sun.

Neither of them enjoyed that expedition. It was the first of all the things they had done together that had failed. Jane wondered why. If they weren't enjoying themselves on a day like that when, she argued, would they enjoy themselves? The day remained as perfect as it had begun. There was nothing wrong, Robert admitted, with the day. They sailed in the sun's path and landed in a divine and solitary cove. Robert was obliged to agree that there was nothing wrong with the cove, and nothing, no nothing in the least wrong with the lunch. There might—yes, of course there might be something wrong with him.

Whatever it was it disappeared as

they sighted Southbourne. Robert, mounting with uneasy haste the steps that led from the beach to the hotel garden, was unusually gay.

They were late for dinner, and the table next theirs was empty. Outside, on the great green lawn in front of the windows, he could see Mrs. Tailleir walking up and down, alone.

He dined with the abstraction of a man pursued by the hour of an appointment. He established Jane in the lounge with all the magazines he could lay his hands on, and went out by the veranda on to the lawn where Mrs. Tailleir was still walking up and down.

The colonel and his wife were in the veranda. They made a low sound of pity as they saw him go.

Mrs. Tailleir seemed more than ever alone. The green space was bare around her as if cleared by the sweep of her gown. She moved quietly with a long and even undulation, a yielding of her whole body to the rhythm of her feet. She had reached the far end of the lawn as Lucy neared her, and he looked for her to turn and face him.

She did not turn.

The lawn at this end was bounded by a gravel walk. The walk was fenced by a low stone wall built on the edge of the cliff. Mrs. Tailleir paused there and seated herself sideways on the wall. Her face was turned from Lucy and he judged her unaware of his approach. In his eyes she gained a new enchantment from the vast and simple spaces of her background, a sea of dull purple, a sky of violet, divinely clear. Her face had the intense, unsubstantial pallor, the magic and stillness of flowers that stand in the blue dusk before night.

She turned at the sound of the man's footsteps on the gravel. She smiled quietly, as if she knew of his coming and was waiting for it there. He greeted her. A few words of no moment passed between them and there was a silence. He stood by the low wall with his face set seaward, as if all his sight were fixed on the trail of smoke that marked the far-off passage of a steamer. Mrs. Tailleir's face was fixed on his. He was aware of it.

Standing beside her, he was aware, too, of something about her alien to sea and sky; something secret, impenetrable, that held her as it were apart, shut in by her own strange and solitary charm.

And she sat there, in the deep quiet of a woman intent upon her hour. He had no ear for the call of her silence, for the voice of the instincts prisoned in blood and brain.

Presently she rose, shrugging her shoulders and gathering her furs about her.

"I want to walk," she said. "Will you come?"

She led the way to the corner where the low wall was joined by a high one, dividing the hotel garden from the open down. There was a gate here; it led to a flight of wooden steps that went zigzag to the beach below. At the first turn in the flight a narrow path was cut on the cliff side. To the right it rose inland, following the slope of the down. To the left it ran level under the low wall, then climbed higher yet to the brow of the headland. There it ended in a square recess, a small white chamber cut from the chalk and open to the sea and sky. From the floor of the recess the cliff dropped sheer to the beach two hundred feet below.

Mrs. Tailleux took the path to the left. Lucy followed her.

The path was stopped by the bend of the great cliff, the recess roofed by its bulging forehead. There was a wooden seat, set well back under this cover. Two persons who found themselves alone there might count on security from interruption.

Mrs. Tailleux and Lucy were alone.

Lucy looked at the cliff wall in front of them.

"We must go back," said he.

"Oh, no," said she. "Don't let's go back."

"But if you want to walk?"

"I don't," said she. "Do you?"

He didn't, and they seated themselves. In the charm of this intimate seclusion Lucy became more than ever dumb. Mrs. Tailleux waited a few minutes in apparent meditation.

All Lucy said was: "May I smoke?"

"You may," She meditated again.

"I was wondering," said she, "whether you were ever going to say anything."

"I didn't know," said Lucy simply, "whether I might. I thought you were thinking."

"So I was. I was thinking of what you were going to say next. I never met anybody who said less and took so long a time to say it in."

"Well," said Lucy, "I was thinking, too."

"I know you were. You needn't be so afraid of me unless you like."

"I am not," said he stiffly, "in the least afraid of you. I'm desperately afraid of saying the wrong thing."

"To me? Or everybody?"

"Not everybody."

"To me, then. Do you think I might be difficult?"

"Difficult?"

"To get on with?"

"Not in the least. Possibly, if I may say so, a little difficult to know."

She smiled. "I don't usually strike people in that light."

"Well—I think I'm afraid of boring you."

"You couldn't if you tried from now to midnight."

"How do you know what I might do?"

"That's it. I don't know. I never should know. It's only the people I'm sure of that bore me. Don't they you?"

He laughed uneasily.

"The people," she went on, "who are sure of me, who think I'm so easy to know. They don't know me and they don't know that I know them. And they're the only people I've ever, ever met. I can tell what they're going to say before they've said it. It's always the same thing. It's—if you like—the inevitable thing. If you can't have anything but the same thing at least you like it put a little differently. You'd think, among them all, they might find it easy to put it a little differently, sometimes. But they never do. And it's the brutal monotony of it that I cannot stand."

"I suppose," said Lucy, "people are monotonous."

"They don't know," said she, evidently ignoring his statement as inadequate, "they don't know how sick I am of it—how insufferably it bores me."

"Ah, there you see—that's what I'm afraid of."

"What?"

"Of saying the wrong thing—the same thing."

"That's it. You'd say it differently and it wouldn't be the same thing at all. And what's more I should never know whether you were going to say it or not."

"There's one thing I'd like to say to you if I knew how, if I knew how you'd take it. You see, though I think I know you——" He hesitated.

"You don't really? You don't know who I am? Or where I come from? Or where I'm going to? I don't know myself."

"I know," said Lucy, "as much as I've any right to. But unluckily the thing I want to know——"

"Is what you haven't any right to?"

"I'm afraid I haven't. The thing I want to know is simply whether I can help you. In any way."

She smiled. "Ah," said she, "you have said it."

"Haven't I said it differently?"

"I'm not sure. You looked different when you said it. That's something."

"I know I've no right to say it at all. What I mean is that if I could do anything for you without boring you, without forcing myself on your acquaintance, I'd be most awfully glad to. You know you needn't recognize me afterward unless you like. Have I put it differently now?"

"Yes. I don't think I've ever heard it put quite that way before."

There was a long pause in which Lucy vainly sought for illumination.

"No," said Mrs. Tailleu, as if to herself. "I should never know—what you were going to say or do next."

"Wouldn't you?"

"No. I didn't know just now whether you were going to speak to me or not. When I said I wanted to walk I didn't

know whether you'd come with me or not."

"I came."

"You came. But when I go——"

"You're not going?"

"Yes—to-morrow, perhaps, or the next day. When I go I shall give you my address and ask you to come and see me. But I shan't know whether you'll come."

"Of course I'll come."

"There's no 'of course' about you. That's the charm of it. I shan't know until you're actually there."

"I shall be there all right."

"What? You'll come?"

"Yes. And I'll bring my sister."

"Your sister?" She drew back slightly. "Turn round, please—this way—and let me look at you."

He turned, laughing. Her eyes searched his face.

"Yes. You mean that. Why do you want to bring your sister?"

"Because I want you to know her."

"Are you sure—quite—quite sure—you want her to know me?"

"Quite—quite sure. If you don't mind—if she won't bore you."

"Oh, she won't bore me."

"You're not afraid of that monotony?"

She turned and looked long at him. "You are very like your sister," she said.

"Am I? How? In what way?"

"In the way we've been talking about. I suppose you know how remarkable you are?"

"No, I really don't think I do."

"Then," said Mrs. Tailleu, "you are all the more remarkable."

"Don't you think," she added, "we had better go back?"

They went back. As they mounted the steps to the garden door, they saw Miss Keating approaching it from the inside. She moved along the low wall that overlooked the path by which they had just come. There was no crunching of pebbles under her feet. She trod, inaudibly, the soft edge of the lawn.

Lucy held the door open for Miss Keating when Mrs. Tailleu had passed through. But Miss Keating had turned

suddenly. She made the pebbles on the walk scream with the vehemence of her retreat.

"Dear me," said Lucy, "it must be rather painful to be as shy as that."

"Mustn't it?" said Mrs. Tailleux.

CHAPTER VI.

The next day it rained. Fitfully at first, at the will of a cold wind that dragged clouds out of heaven. A gleam of sunshine in the afternoon. Then wild rain driven slantwise by the gusts, and now, at five o'clock, no wind at all, but a straight, soaking downpour.

The guests at the Cliff Hotel were all indoors. Colonel Hankin and his wife were reading in a corner of the lounge. Mr. Soutar the clergyman was dozing over a newspaper by an imaginary fire. The other men drifted continually from the bar to the billiard room and back again.

Mrs. Tailleux and Lucy were sitting in the veranda with rugs round them, watching the rain, and watched by Colonel and Mrs. Hankin.

Jane had gone into the drawing-room to write letters. There was nobody there but the old lady who sat in the bay of the window, everlastingly knitting, and Miss Keating, isolated on a sofa near the door.

Everybody in the hotel was happy and occupied, except Miss Keating. Her eyes followed the labor of Miss Lucy's pen, watching for the stroke that should end it. She had made up her mind she must speak to her.

Miss Keating was subject to a passion which circumstances were perpetually frustrating. She desired to be interesting, profoundly, personally interesting to people. She disliked publicity partly because it reduced her to mournful insignificance and silence. The few moments in her life which counted were those private ones when she found attention surrendered wholly to her service. She hungered for the unworn, unwearied sympathy of strangers. Her fancy had followed and fastened on the Lucys, perceiving this exquisitely virgin quality in them. And

now she was suffering from an oppression of the nerves that urged her to a supreme outpouring.

Miss Lucy seemed absorbed in her correspondence. She felt that Miss Keating's eyes were upon her, and as she wrote she planned a dextrous retreat. It would, she knew, be difficult, owing to Miss Keating's complete occupation of the sofa by the door.

She had made that lady's acquaintance in the morning, having found her sitting sad and solitary in the lounge. She had then felt that it would be unkind not to say something to her, and she had spent the greater part of the morning saying it. Miss Keating had tracked the thin thread of conversation carefully, as if in search of an unapparent opportunity. Jane, aware of the watchfulness of her method, had taken fright and left her. She had had an awful feeling that Miss Keating was about to bestow a confidence on her—somebody else's confidence which Miss Keating had broken badly, she suspected.

Jane had finished her letters. She was addressing the envelopes. Now she was stamping them. Now she was crossing the room. Miss Keating lowered her eyes as the moment came which was to bring her into communion with the Lucys.

Jane had made her way very quietly to the door and thought to pass through it unobserved when Miss Keating seemed to leap up from her sofa as from an ambush.

"Miss Lucy," she said, and Jane turned at the penetrating sibilants of her name.

Miss Keating thrust toward her a face of tragic and imminent appeal. A nervous vibration passed through her and communicated itself to Jane.

"What is it?" Jane paused in the doorway.

"May I speak to you a moment?"

"Certainly."

But Miss Keating did not speak. She stood there, clasping and unclasping her hands. It struck Jane that she was trying to conceal an eagerness of which she was more than half ashamed.

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"What is it?" she said again.

Miss Keating sighed. "Will you sit down? Here—I think." She glanced significantly at the old lady who was betraying unmistakable interest in the scene. There was no place where they could sit beyond her range of vision. But the sofa was on the far side of it and Miss Keating's back protested against observation.

She bent forward, her thin arms stretched out to Jane, her hands locked, as if she still held tight the confidence she offered.

"Miss Lucy," she said, "you were so kind to me this morning, so kind and helpful."

"I didn't know it."

"No, you didn't know it." Miss Keating looked down, and she smiled as if at some pleasant secret of her own. "I think when we are really helping each other we don't know it. You couldn't realize what it meant to me, your just coming up and speaking to me that way."

"I'm very glad," said Jane; and thought she meant it.

Miss Keating smiled again. "I wonder," she said, "if I might ask you to help me—again?"

"If I can."

"You look as if you could. I'm in a great difficulty, and I would like you—if you would—to give me your advice."

"That," said Jane, "is a very dangerous thing to give."

"It wouldn't be in this case. If I might only tell you. There's no one in the hotel whom I can speak to."

"Surely," said Jane, "there is Mrs. Tailleur, your friend."

"My friend? Yes, she is my friend. That's why I can't say anything to her. She is the difficulty."

"Indeed," said Jane coldly. Nothing in Miss Keating appealed to the spirit of adventurous sympathy.

"I have received so much kindness from her. She is kind."

"Evidently," said Jane.

"That makes my position so very delicate—so very disagreeable."

"I should think it would."

Miss Keating felt the antipathy in Miss Lucy's tone. "You *do* think it strange of me to come to you when I don't know you?"

"No. No. People are always coming to me. Perhaps because they don't know me."

"Ah, you see, you make them come."

"Indeed I don't. I try to stop them."

"Are you trying to stop me?"

"Yes. I think I am."

"Don't stop me, please."

"But surely it would be better to consult your own people."

Miss Keating paused. Miss Lucy had suggested the obvious course which she had avoided for reasons which were not obvious even to herself.

"My own people," she murmured pensively. "They are not here."

It was not her fault if Miss Lucy jumped to the conclusion that they were dead.

"I wonder," she said, "if you see my difficulty?"

"I see it plainly enough. Mrs. Tailleur has been very kind to you, and you want to leave her. Why?"

"I'm not sure that I ought to stay."

"You must be the best judge of your obligations."

"There are," said Miss Keating, "other things. I don't know that I'm a good judge of *them*. You see, I was brought up very carefully."

"Were you?"

"Yes. I'm not sure that it's wise to be as careful as all that—to keep young girls in ignorance of things they—things they must, sooner or later—"

She paused, staring as if at an abyss.

"What things?" asked Jane bluntly.

"I don't know what things. I don't know anything, I'm afraid. I'm so innocent, Miss Lucy, that I'm like a child in the dark. I think I want some one to hold my hand and tell me there's nothing there."

"Perhaps there isn't."

"Yes, but it's so dark that I can't see whether there is or isn't. I'm just like a little child. Except that it imagines things and I don't."

"Don't you? Are you sure you don't

let your imagination run away with you sometimes?"

"Not," said Miss Keating, "not on this subject. Even when I'm brought into contact." Her shoulder-blades obeyed the suggestion of her brain and shuddered. "I don't know whether it's good or bad to refuse to face things. I can't help it. All that side of life is so intensely disagreeable to me."

"It's not disagreeable to me," said Jane. "And what *has* it got to do with Mrs. Tailleux?"

Miss Keating smiled queerly. "I don't know. I wish I did."

"If you mean you think she isn't nice I can tell you I'm sure you're mistaken."

"It's not what *I* think. It's what other people think."

"What people?"

"The people here."

Little Jane lifted her head superbly.

"*We* think the people here have behaved abominably to Mrs. Tailleux."

She lifted her voice, too. She didn't care who heard it. She rose, making herself look as tall as possible.

"And if you're her friend," said she, "you ought to think so, too."

She walked out of the room, still superbly. Miss Keating was left to a painful meditation on misplaced confidence.

CHAPTER VII.

She had had no intention of betraying Kitty. Kitty, she imagined, had sufficiently betrayed herself. And if she hadn't, as long as Kitty chose to behave like a dubious person, she could hardly be surprised if persons by no means dubious refused to be compromised. She, Miss Keating, was in no way responsible for Kitty Tailleux. Neither was she responsible for what other people thought of her. That was all, in effect, that she had intimated to Miss Lucy.

She did not say what she herself precisely thought, nor when she had first felt that uncomfortable sensation of exposure, that little shiver of cold and shame that seized her when in Kitty Tailleux's society. She had no means

of measuring the lengths to which Kitty had gone and might yet go. She was simply possessed, driven and lashed by her vision of Kitty as she had seen her yesterday; Kitty standing at the end of the garden, on the watch for Mr. Lucy; Kitty returning, triumphant, with the young man at her heels.

She had seen Kitty with other men before, but there was something in this particular combination that she could not bear to think of. All the same, she had lain awake half the night thinking of it. She had Kitty Tailleux and Mr. Lucy on her nerves.

She had desired a pretext for approaching Miss Lucy, and poor Kitty was a pretext made to her hand. Nothing could be more appealing than the spectacle of helpless innocence struggling with a problem as terrible as Kitty. Miss Keating knew all the time that as far as she was concerned there was no problem. If she disliked being with Kitty she had nothing to do but to pack up and go. Kitty had said in the beginning that if she didn't like her she must go.

That course was obvious but unattractive. And the most obvious and most unattractive thing about it was that it would not have brought her any further with the Lucys. It would, in fact, have removed her altogether from their view.

But she had done for herself now with the Lucys. She should have kept her nerves to herself. They were in an awful state. And as the state of her nerves was owing to Kitty, she held Kitty responsible for the crisis. She writhed as she thought of it. She writhed as she thought of Mr. Lucy. She writhed as she thought of Kitty, and writhing, she rubbed her own venom into her hurt.

Of course she would have to leave Kitty.

But, if she did, the alternatives were grim. She would have either to go back to her own people, or to look after somebody's children or an invalid. Her own people were not interested in Miss Keating. Children and invalids demanded imperatively that she should

be interested in them. And Miss Keating, unfortunately, was not interested in anybody but herself.

So interested was she that she had forgotten the old lady who sat knitting in the window, who, distracted by Miss Lucy's outburst, had let her ball roll on to the floor. It rolled away across the room to Miss Keating's feet, and there was a great tangle in the wool. Miss Keating picked up the ball and brought it to the old lady, winding and disentangling it as she went.

"Thank you, my wool is a nuisance to everybody," said the old lady. And she began to talk about her knitting. All the year round she knitted comforters for the deep-sea fishermen, gray and red and blue. When she was tired of one color she went to another. It would be red's turn next.

Miss Keating felt as if she were being drawn to the old lady by that thin thread of wool. And the old lady kept looking at her all the time.

"Your face is familiar to me," she said. Oddly enough, the old lady's face was familiar to Miss Keating. "I have met you somewhere. I cannot think where."

"I wonder," said Miss Keating, "if it was at Wenden, my father's parish?"

The old lady's look was sharper. "Your father is the vicar of Wenden?"

"Yes."

"I thought so."

"Do you know him?" The ball slipped from Miss Keating's nervous fingers and the wool was tangled worse than ever.

"No, no. But I could tell that you were——" She hesitated. "It was at Ikley that I met you. It's coming back to me. You were not then with Mrs. Tailleir, I think? You were with an invalid lady?"

"Yes. I was, until I broke down."

"May I ask if you knew Mrs. Tailleir before you came to her?"

"No. I knew nothing of her. I know nothing now."

"Oh," said the old lady. It was as if she had said: "That settles it."

The wool was disentangled. It was winding them nearer and nearer.

"Have you been with her long?"

"Not more than three months."

There were only five inches of wool between them now. "Do you mind telling me where you picked her up?"

Miss Keating remembered with compunction that it was Kitty who had picked her up. Picked her up, as it were in her arms, and carried her away from the dreadful northern "Hydrophobic" where she had dropped, forlorn and exhausted, in the trail of her opulent invalid.

"It was at Matlock. Why?"

"Because, my dear—you must forgive me, but I could not help hearing what that young lady said. She was so very—so very unrestrained."

"Very ill-bred, I should say."

"Well—I should not have said that. You couldn't mistake the Lucys for anything but gentle people. Evidently I was meant to hear. I've no doubt she thinks us all very unkind."

"Unkind? Why?"

"Because we have—have not exactly—taken to Mrs. Tailleir, if you'll forgive my saying so."

Miss Keating's smile forgave her. "People do not always take to her. She is more a favorite, I think, with men." She gave the ball into the old lady's hands.

The old lady coughed slightly. "Thank you, my dear. I dare say you have thought it strange. We are such a friendly little community here. And if Mrs. Tailleir had been at all possible——"

"I believe," said Miss Keating, "she is very well connected. Lord Matcham is a most intimate friend of hers."

"That doesn't speak very well for Lord Matcham, I'm afraid."

"I wish," said Miss Keating, "you would be frank with me."

"I should like to be, my dear."

"Then—please—if there's anything you think I should be told—tell me."

"I think you ought to be told that we are all wondering a little at your being seen with Mrs. Tailleir. You are too nice, if I may say so, and she is—well, not the sort of person you should be going about with."

Miss Keating's mouth opened slightly.

"Do you know anything about her?"

"I know less than you do. I'm only going by what Colonel Hankin says."

"Colonel Hankin?"

"Mrs. Hankin, I should say. Of course I couldn't speak about Mrs. Tailleux to *him*."

"Has he ever met her?"

"Met her? In society? My dear! He has never met her anywhere."

"Then would he—would he really know?"

"It isn't only the colonel. All the men in the hotel say the same thing. You can see how they stare at her."

"Oh—those men!"

"You may depend upon it, they know more than we do."

"How can they? How—how do they tell?"

"I suppose they see something."

Miss Keating saw it, too. She shuddered involuntarily. Her knees shook under her. She sat down.

"I'm sure I don't know what it is," said the old lady.

"Nor I," said Miss Keating faintly.

"They say you've only got to look at her—"

A dull flush spread over Miss Keating's face. She was breathing hard. Her mouth opened to speak; a thick sigh came through it, but no words.

"I've looked," said the old lady, "and I can't see anything about her different from other people. She dresses so quietly; but I'm told they often do. They're very careful that we shouldn't know them."

"They? Oh—you don't mean that Mrs. Tailleux—is—"

"I'm only going by what I'm told. Mind you, I get it all from Mrs. Hankin."

Miss Keating, who had been leaning forward, sat suddenly bolt upright. Her whole body was shaking now. Her voice was low but violent.

"Oh—oh—I knew it—I knew. I always felt there was something about her."

"I'm sure, my dear, you didn't *know*."

"I didn't. I didn't think it was that.

I only thought she wasn't nice. I thought she was fast, or she'd been divorced, or something—something terrible of that sort."

She still sat bolt upright, gazing open-eyed, open-mouthed at the terror. She was filled with a fierce excitement, a sort of exultation. Then doubt came to her.

"But surely—surely—the hotel people would know?"

"Hotel people never know anything that isn't their interest to know. If there were any complaint, or if any of the guests were to leave on account of her, Mrs. Tailleux would have to go."

"And has there been any complaint?"

"I believe Mr. Soutar—the clergyman—has spoken to the manager."

"And the manager?"

"Well, you see, Mr. Soutar is always complaining. He complained about the food, and about his bedroom. He has the cheapest bedroom in the hotel."

Miss Keating was thinking hard. Her idea was that Kitty Tailleux should go and that she should remain.

"Don't you think if Colonel Hankin spoke to the manager—"

"He wouldn't. He's much too kind. Besides, the manager can't do anything as long as she behaves herself. And now that the Lucys have taken her up— And then, there's you. Your being with her is her great protection. As she very well knew when she engaged you."

"I was engaged for *that*!"

"There can be little doubt of it."

"Oh—then nobody thinks that I knew it? That—I'm like her?"

"Nobody *could* think that of you."

"What am I to do? I'm so helpless, and I've no one to advise me. And it's not as if we really knew anything."

"My dear, I think you should leave her."

"Of course I shall leave her. I can't stay another day. But I don't know how I ought to do it."

"Would you like to consult Colonel Hankin?"

"Oh, no. I don't think I could bear to speak about it to him."

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"Well, and perhaps he would not like to be brought into it, either."

"Then—what reason can I give her?"

"Of course you cannot tell her what you've heard."

Miss Keating was silent.

"Or if you do, you must please not give me as your informant."

"I will not do that."

"Nor—please—Colonel and Mrs. Hankin. We none of us want to be mixed up with any unpleasant business."

"You may trust me," said Miss Keating. "I am very discreet."

She rose. The old lady held her with detaining eyes.

"What shall you do when you have left her?"

"I suppose I shall have to look for another place."

"You are not going home, then?"

Miss Keating's half smile hinted at renunciation. "I have too many younger sisters."

"Well, let me see. I shall be going back to Surbiton to-morrow. How would it be if you were to come with me?"

"Oh, Mrs.—Mrs.—" The smile wavered, but it held its place.

"Mrs. Jurd. If we suited each other you might stay with me, at any rate for a week or two. I've been a long time looking out for a companion."

Miss Keating's smile was now strained with hesitation. Mrs. Jurd was not an invalid and she was interested in Miss Keating. These were points in her favor. On the other hand, nobody who could do better would choose to live with Mrs. Jurd and wind wool and talk about the deep-sea fishermen.

"I am living," said Mrs. Jurd, "with my nephew at Surbiton. I have to keep his house for him."

"Then, do you think you would really need any one?"

"Indeed I do. My nephew isn't a companion for me. He's in the city all day and out most evenings, or he brings his friends in and they get smoking and so—"

Miss Keating's smile was now released from its terrible constraint. A

slight tremor, born of that deliverance, passed over her face, and left it rosy. But having committed herself to the policy of hesitation she had a certain delicacy in departing from it now.

"Are you quite sure you would care to have me?"

"My dear, I am quite sure that I don't care to have any one who is not a lady. And I am quite sure that I am talking to a lady. It is very seldom in these days that one can be sure."

Miss Keating made a little bow and blushed.

After a great deal of conversation it was settled that she should exchange the Cliff Hotel for the Metropole that night, and that in the morning she should leave Southbourne for Surbiton with Mrs. Jurd.

When Colonel and Mrs. Hankin looked in to report upon the weather this scheme was submitted to them as to supreme judges in a question of propriety.

Mrs. Tailleux was not mentioned. Her name stood for things that decorous persons do not mention, except under certain sanctions and the plea of privilege. The colonel might mention them to his wife, and his wife might mention them to Mrs. Jurd who might pass them on with unimpeachable propriety to Miss Keating. But these ladies were unable to discuss Mrs. Tailleux in the presence of the colonel. Still, as none of them could do without her, she was permitted to appear in a purified form, veiled in obscure references, or diminished to an innocent abstraction.

Miss Keating, Mrs. Jurd said, was not at all satisfied with her—er—her present situation.

The colonel lowered his eyes for one iniquitous instant while Mrs. Tailleux, disguised as Miss Keating's present situation, laughed through the veil and trailed before him her unabashed enormity.

He managed to express with becoming gravity his approval of the scheme. He only wondered whether it might not be better for Miss Keating to stay where she was until the morning, that

her step might not seem so precipitate, so marked.

Miss Keating replied that she thought she had been sufficiently compromised already.

"I don't think," said the colonel, "that I should put it that way."

He felt that by putting it that way Miss Keating had brought them a little too near what he called the verge, the verge they were all so dexterously avoiding. He would have been glad if he could have been kept out of this somewhat perilous debate, but, since the women had dragged him into it, it was his business to see that it was confined within the limits of comparative safety. Goodness knew where they would be landed if the women lost their heads.

He looked gravely at Miss Keating. That look unnerved her and she took a staggering step that brought her within measurable distance of the verge.

The colonel might put it any way he liked, she said. There must not be a moment's doubt as to her attitude.

Now it was not her attitude that the colonel was thinking of, but his own. It had been an attitude of dignity, of judicial benevolence, of incorruptible reserve. Any sort of unpleasantness was agony to a man who had the habit of perfection. It was dawning on him that unless he exercised considerable caution he would find himself mixed up in an uncommonly disagreeable affair. He might even be held responsible for it, since the dubiousness of the topic need never have emerged if he had not unveiled it to his wife. So that, when Miss Keating in her unsteadiness declared that there must not be a moment's doubt as to her attitude, the colonel himself was seized with a slight vertigo. He suggested that people—luckily, he got no nearer it than that—people were, after all, entitled to the benefit of any doubt there might be.

Then when the danger was sheer in front of them he drew back. Miss Keating, he said, had nobody but herself to please. He had no more light to throw on the—er—the situation. Really, he said to himself, they couldn't have hit on a more serviceable word.

He considered that he had now led the discussion to its close on lines of irreproachable symbolism. Nobody had overstepped the verge. Mrs. Tailleux had not once been mentioned. She might have disappeared behind the shelter provided by the merciful, silent deficiencies. Colonel Hankin had shown his unwillingness to pursue her into the dim and undesirable regions whence she came.

Then suddenly Miss Keating cried out her name.

She had felt herself abandoned, left there, all alone on the verge, and before any of them knew where they were she was over it. Happily, she was unaware of the violence with which she went. She seemed to herself to move, downward indeed, but with a sure and slow propulsion. She believed herself challenged to the demonstration by the colonel's attitude. The high distinction of it, that was remotely akin to Mr. Lucy's, somehow obscured and degraded her. She conceived a dislike to this well-behaved and honorable gentleman, and for his visible perfections, the clean silver whiteness and the pinkness of him.

His case was clear to her. He was a man, and he had looked at Kitty Tailleux, and his sympathies, like Mr. Lucy's, had suffered an abominable perversion. His judgment, like Mr. Lucy's, had surrendered to the horrible charm. She said to herself bitterly, that she could not compete with that.

She trembled as she faced the colonel. "Very well, then," said she, "as there is no one to help me, I must protect myself. I shall not sleep another night under the same roof as Mrs. Tailleux."

The three winced as if the name had been a blow struck at them. The colonel's silver eyebrows rose bristling. Mrs. Hankin got up and went out of the room. Mrs. Jurd bent her head over her knitting. None of them looked at Miss Keating; not even the colonel as he spoke.

"If you feel like that about it," said he, "there is nothing more to be said."

He rose and followed his wife.

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had closed on them, he reproved her very seriously for her indiscretion.

"You asked me," said he, "what I thought of Mrs. Tailleux and I told you. But I never said you were to go and hand it on. What on earth have you been saying to those women?"

"I didn't say anything to Miss Keating."

"No, but you must have told Mrs. What's-her-name?"

"Not very much. I don't like talking about unpleasant subjects, as you know."

"Well, somebody's been talking about them. I shouldn't wonder after this if poor Mrs. Tailleux's room were wanted to-morrow."

"Oh, do you think they'll turn her out?"

She was a kind woman and she could not bear to think it would come to that.

The colonel was silent. He was sitting on the bed, watching his wife as she undid the fastenings of her gown. At that moment a certain brief and sudden sin of his youth rose up before him. It looked at him pitifully, reproachfully, with the eyes of Mrs. Tailleux.

"I wish," said Mrs. Hankin, "we hadn't said anything at all."

"So do I," said the colonel. But for the life of him he couldn't help saying something more. "If she goes," he said, "I rather think that young fellow will go, too."

"And the sister?"

"Oh—the sister, I imagine, will remain."

CHAPTER VIII.

Kitty was dressed. She was calling out to her companion: "Bunny, hurry up, you'll be late." No answer came from the adjoining room. She tapped at the door and there was no answer. She tried to open the door. It was locked on the inside. "Bunny," she cried, "are you there?" She laid her ear to the panel. There was the sound of a box being dragged across the floor.

"You *are* there, are you? Why don't

you answer? I can't hear you. Why can't you open the door?"

Miss Keating unlocked the door. She held it ajar and spoke through the aperture.

"Be good enough," she said, "to leave me alone."

"All right. But you'll be awfully late for dinner."

"I am not coming down to dinner."

Miss Keating shut the door, but she did not lock it.

Kitty gave a cry of distress.

"Bunny, what is the matter? Let me in—do let me in."

"You can come in if you like."

Kitty opened the door. But instead of going in, she stood fixed upon the threshold, struck dumb by what she saw.

The room was in disorder. Clothes littered the bed. More clothes were heaped on the floor around an open trunk. Miss Keating was kneeling on the floor seizing on things and thrusting them into the trunk. Their strangled, tortured forms witnessed to the violence of her mood.

"What *are* you doing?"

"You can see what I'm doing. I am packing my things."

"Why?"

"Because I am going away."

"Have you had bad news? Is—is anybody dead?"

"I wouldn't ask any questions if I were you."

"I must ask some. You know, people *don't* walk off like this without giving any reason."

"I am surprised at your asking for my reason."

"Sur-prised," said Kitty softly. "Are you going because of me?"

Miss Keating did not answer.

"I see. So you don't like me any more?"

"We won't put it that way."

Kitty came and stood beside Miss Keating and looked down at her.

"Bunny, have I been a brute to you?"

"No."

"Have I ever been a brute to any one? Have you ever known me do an

unkind thing, or say an unkind word to any one?"

"N-no."

"Then why do you listen when people say unkind things about me?"

Miss Keating stooped very low over the trunk. Her attitude no doubt accounted for the redness of her face which Kitty noticed.

"I think I know what they've been saying. Did you or did you not listen?"

"Listen?"

"Yes. I don't mean behind doors and things. But you let them talk to you?"

"You cannot stop people talking."

"Can't you? I'd have stopped them pretty soon if they'd talked to me about you. What did they say?"

"You've said just now you knew."

"Very well. Who said it?"

"You've no reason to assume that anybody has said anything."

"Was it Mr. Lucy or his sister?"

Miss Keating became agitated.

"I have never discussed you with Mr. Lucy. Or his sister." There was a little click in Miss Keating's throat where the lie stuck.

"I know you haven't. They wouldn't let you."

Kitty smiled. Miss Keating saw the smile. She trembled. Tears started to her eyes. She rose and began sorting the pile of clothing on the bed.

Something in her action inspired Kitty with an intolerable passion of wonder and of pity. She came to her and laid her hand on her hair, lightly and with a certain fear.

Miss Keating had once purred under Kitty's caresses. Now she jerked back suddenly and beat off the timid hand.

"I wish you wouldn't touch me."

"Why not?"

"Because it makes me loathe you."

Kitty sat down on the bed. She had wrapped her hand in her pocket handkerchief as if it had been hurt.

"Poor Bunny," she said. "Are you feeling as bad as all that? You must want dreadfully to marry that long man. But you needn't loathe me. I'm not going to make him marry me."

"Can you not think of anything but that?"

"I can think of all sorts of things. At present I'm thinking of that. It does seem such an awful pity that you haven't married. A dear little, sweet little, good little thing like you—for you are good, Bunny. It's a shame that you should have to live in rage and fury, and be very miserable, and—rather cruel, just because of that."

"If every word you said of me was true, I'd rather be myself than you, Mrs. Tailleux."

"That—Miss Keating—is purely a matter of taste. Unhappiness is all that is the matter with you. You'd be quite a kind woman if it wasn't for that. You see, I do understand you, Bunny. So it isn't very wise of you to leave me. Think what an awful time you'll have if you go and live with somebody who doesn't understand and won't make allowances. And you're not strong. You never will be as long as you're miserable. You'll go and live with ill old ladies and get into that state you were in at Matlock. And there won't be anybody to look after you. And, Bunny, you'll never marry—never; and it'll be simply awful. You'll go getting older and older, and nervier and nervier, till you're so nervy that even the old ladies won't have you any more. Bad as I am, you'd better stop with me."

"Stop with you? How can I stop with you?"

"Well, you haven't told me yet why you can't."

"I can't tell you. I—I've written you a letter. It's there on the dressing table."

Kitty went to the dressing table.

"I am returning you my salary for the quarter I have been with you."

Kitty took up the letter.

"I'd rather you did not read it until after I am gone."

"That's not fair, Bunny."

"Please—I've written what I had to say because I wished to avoid a scene."

"There won't be any scene. I'm not going to read your beastly letter."

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She opened the envelope and removed the notes and laid them on the dressing table. Then she tore up the letter and the envelope together and tossed them into the grate.

"And I'm not going to take those notes."

"Nor am I."

"You'll have to." She found her companion's purse and tucked the notes inside it.

Miss Keating turned on her. "Mrs. Tailleux, you shall not thrust your money on me. I will not take it."

"You little fool, you've got to."

Miss Keating closed her eyes. It was a way she had. "I can't. And you must please take back the things you've given me. They are all there, in that heap on the bed."

Kitty turned and looked at them. They were all there; everything she had ever given to her, the dresses, the combs, the little trinkets. She took some of these and stared at them as she held them in her hand.

"Won't you keep anything?"

"I won't keep a thing."

"Not even the little chain I gave you? Oh, Bunny, you liked your little chain."

Miss Keating took the chain from her and laid it with the rest.

"Please leave me to pack."

"Presently. Bunny—look at me—straight. Why are you doing this?"

"I wish to be spared the unpleasantness of speaking."

"But you've got to speak. Out with it. What have I done?"

"You know better than I do what your life has been."

"My life? I should think I did. Rather."

Kitty crossed the room to the bell.

"What time does your train go?"

"My—I—I must leave this at seven thirty."

Kitty rang the bell. A housemaid appeared.

"I want a fly at seven thirty. Please see that Miss Keating's luggage is downstairs by then. Her room will not be wanted."

Miss Keating's face was livid.

"You wish," said she, "the hotel people to think that it is you who have given *me* notice?"

"You poor thing. I only wanted the fly to go down to my account."

"You expect me to believe that?"

"I don't expect anything of you—now. I suppose it's Colonel Hankin who has been talking about my life? It wasn't Mr. Lucy, though you'd like to make me think so."

"There's no need for anybody to talk. Do you suppose I don't know what you are? You can't hide what's in you. You're—you're full of it. And you've no shame about it. You can stand there, knowing that I know, and ask me what you've done. How do I know what you've done? I don't want to know it. It's bad enough to know what you are. And to know that I've been living with it for three months. You got hold of me an innocent woman, and used me as a cover for your evil life. That's all you wanted me for."

"Whatever I've done, I've done nothing to deserve that."

"You think not? Have you any idea what you've done—to me?"

"No. I haven't. What have I done?"

"I'm going to tell you. You've never ceased casting it up to me that I'm not married, that I haven't your attractions—I thank Heaven I have not. I am not the sort of woman you take me for. I never have wanted to be married, but if—if ever I had I shouldn't want it now. You've spoiled all that for me. I shall never see a man without thinking of you. I shall hate every man I meet because of you."

"Well, hate them, hate them. It's better than loving them—Let me strap that box. You'll tear your poor heart out."

Miss Keating wrenched the strap from Kitty's hands.

"Ah, how you hate me. Hate the men, dear. That can't do you any harm. But don't hate the other women. At my worst I never did that."

Miss Keating shrugged her shoulders, for she was putting on her coat. Kitty looked at her and sighed.

"Bunny," said she, "I want to make it quite clear to you why you're going. You think it's because you know something horrible about me. But it isn't. You don't know anything about me. You've only been listening to some of the people in the hotel. They don't know anything about me, either. They've never met me in their lives before. But they've been thinking things and saying things, and you've swallowed it all because you wanted to. You're so desperately keen on making out there's something bad about me. Of course, you might have made it out. You might have proved all sorts of things against me. But you haven't. That's my whole point. You haven't proved a thing, have you? If you were my husband and wanted to get rid of me you'd have to trump up some evidence, wouldn't you?"

"There is no need to trump up evidence. I'm acting on my instinct and belief."

"Oh, I know you believe it all right."

"I can't help what I believe."

"No, you can't help it. You can't help what you want. And you wouldn't have wanted it if you hadn't been so furiously unhappy. I was furiously unhappy myself once. That's why I understand you."

"It is five-and-twenty minutes past seven, Mrs. Tailleur."

"And in five minutes you'll go. And you won't hear a word in my defense? You won't? Why, if I'd murdered somebody and they were going to hang me they'd let me defend myself before they did it. All I was going to say was: Supposing everything you said was true, I think *you* might have made allowances for me. You can't? I was harder driven than you."

"No two cases could well be more different."

"Once they were the same. Only it was worse for me. All your temptations are bottled up inside you. Mine rushed at me from inside and outside, too. I've had all the things you had. I had a strait-laced parson for my father—so had you. I was poked away in a

hole in the country—so were you. I had little sisters—so had you. My mother sent me away from home for fear I should harm them." Her voice shook. "I wouldn't have harmed them for the world. I was sent to live with an old lady—so were you. I was shut up with her all day, till I got ill and couldn't sleep at night. I never saw a soul but one or two other old ladies. They were quite fond of me—I made them. I should have died of it if it hadn't been for that. Then—do listen, Bunny—something happened, and I broke loose, and got away. You never had a chance to get away, so you don't know what it feels like. Perhaps, I think, when it came to the point you'd have been afraid, or something. I wasn't. And I was young. I'm young still. You can't judge me. Anyhow, I know what you've been through. That's what made me sorry for you. Can't you be a little sorry for me?"

Miss Keating said nothing. She was putting on her hat, and her mouth at the moment was closed tight over a long hatpin. She drew it out slowly between her shut lips. Meeting Kitty's eyes she blinked.

"You needn't be sorry," said Kitty. "I've had things that you haven't."

Miss Keating turned to the looking-glass and put on her veil. Her back was toward Kitty. The two women's faces were in the glass, the young face and the middle-aged, each searching for the other. Kitty's face was tearful and piteous; it pleaded with the other face in the glass, a face furtive with hate, that hung between two lifted arms, behind a veil.

Miss Keating's hands struggled with her veil.

"I mayn't tie it for you?" said Kitty.

"No, thank you."

There was a knock at the door, and Miss Keating started.

"It's the men for your boxes. Come into my room and say good-by."

"I prefer to say good-by here, if it's all the same to you. Good-by."

"You won't even shake hands with me? Well, if you won't— Why

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"No, no. I don't want to take it."

"I must let those men in," said Miss Keating. "You are not going to make a scene?"

"I? Oh, Lord, no. You needn't mind me. I'll go."

She went into her own room and flung herself face downward on to her pillow, and slid by the bedside, kneeling, to the floor.

TO BE CONTINUED.



THE CYNICAL LOVER

SHALL I, wasting in despair,
Die because a woman's fair?—*George Wither.*



ALL romance is mockery. Romance is as out of date as good manners.—*Julian Sturgis.*



MEN serve women kneeling. When they get on their feet they go away.—*William Makepeace Thackeray.*



POETS choose mistresses who have the fewest charms, that they may make something out of nothing.—*William Hazlitt.*



WHEN a man becomes familiar with his goddess, she quickly sinks into a woman.—*Joseph Addison.*



It is true that it is never wise to leave a woman alone.—*Anatole France.*



Love departs when lovers are separated; it departs when they see too much of each other; it departs in consequence of malicious gossip; aye, it departs also without these causes.—*Marims of Hala.*

THE PERFECT HEROINE

According to Henry Fielding

LO! adorned with all the charms in which nature can array her, bedecked with beauty, youth, sprightliness, innocence, modesty, and tenderness, breathing sweetness from her rosy lips, and darting brightness from her sparkling eyes, the lovely Sophia comes!

She was a middle-sized woman, but inclining to tall. Her shape was not only exact, but extremely delicate, and the nice proportion of her arms promised the truest symmetry in her limbs. Her hair, which was black, was so luxuriant that it reached her middle, before she cut it to comply with the modern fashion; and it was now curled so gracefully in her neck that few would believe it to be her own. If envy could find any part of her face which demanded less commendation than the rest, it might possibly think her forehead might have been higher without prejudice to her. Her eyebrows were full, even, and arched beyond the power of art to imitate. Her black eyes had a luster in them which all her softness could not extinguish. Her nose was exactly regular, and her mouth, in which were two rows of ivory, exactly answered Sir John Suckling's description in those lines

Her lips were red, and one was thin,
Compared to that was next her chin.
Some bee had stung it newly.

Her cheeks were of the oval kind; and in her right she had a dimple, which the least smile discovered. Her chin had certainly its share in forming the beauty of her face; but it was difficult to say it was either large or small, though perhaps it was rather of the former kind. Her complexion was rather more of the lily than the rose; but when exercise or modesty increased her natural color, no vermilion could equal it. Then one might indeed cry out with the celebrated Doctor Donne:

"Her pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,
That one might almost say her body thought."

Her neck was long and finely turned; and here, if I was not afraid of offending her delicacy, I might justly say the highest beauties of the Venus de Medici were outdone. Here was whiteness which no lilies, ivories, nor alabaster could match. The finest cambric might indeed be supposed to cover from envy that bosom which was whiter than itself. It was indeed

A gloss shining beyond the purest brightness of Parian marble.

Such was the outside of Sophia. Nor was this beautiful frame disgraced by an inhabitant unworthy of it. Her mind was every way equal to her person; nay, the latter borrowed some charms from the former, for when she smiled the sweetness of her temper diffused that glory over her countenance which no regularity of features can give.

It may be proper to say that whatever mental accomplishments she had derived from nature, they were somewhat improved and cultivated by art. By her aunt's conversation and instructions Sophia was perfectly well-bred, though perhaps she wanted a little of that ease in her behavior which is to be acquired only by habit, and living within what is called the polite circle. But this, to say the truth, is often too dearly purchased, and though it hath charms so inexpressible, that the French, perhaps, among other qualities, mean to express this when they declare they know not what it is, yet its absence is well compensated by innocence; nor can good sense and a natural gentility ever stand in need of it.—From "Tom Jones."

by
Richard Le Gallienne

Author of

*"The Quest of the
Golden Girl"*



The
ROSE THAT CAME
EVERY MORNING

SHE had grown so sadly accustomed to the vulgar compliment of flowers that she almost hated the beautiful things that common men put to such base uses. Sitting in front of her typewriter, seven hours a day, in the foyer of a great New York hotel, young and beautiful, she had become almost tragically weary of what her experience—too seldom varied by a consoling exception—had brought her to regard as the insulting admiration of man.

There was wisdom under the coiled gold of her vinelike hair; and beneath the blossom of her face, and the grave grace of her slim figure, was the proud purity of a girl whose only disadvantage in the world was the poverty of a father and mother whom she loved, somewhat defeated makers of a home full of all noble and gentle influences.

It was for them and for that fair home that she sat at her typewriting each day; and the mere work of it was nothing, nothing but gladness, as she thought of them. Its only hardship, strange as it may sound, were the

flowers that, each morning, were there on her desk, flowers often exotic and costly, the money paid for which would have taken her old mother and father in wintertime to one of those warm and sunny places down South by the sea, of which, as the cold got hold of their old bones and their thinning blood, they sometimes wistfully spoke.

The waste of money in this world—easily come to some who spend it, but so hard earned by unthought-of and unknown others—how often she thought of that! And because she loved beauty more than money, she thought oftenest of the waste of beautiful flowers. For of what use to her were the flowers that came to her each morning? She could not wear them, or even keep them by her on her desk—for to do so would be to seem to accept the odious admiration, so called, that they were employed to represent. For flowers, alas! had become to her the symbols of the fools and cads—those were not her own words—who took advantage of her doing her day's work—with a beautiful face.

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If she could only have left her good looks at home—as some women seem to do, or as workmen save their good clothes by overalls—she knew well enough that her desk would have gone from December to December without a single flower.

Often she thought that the flowers thrown into a grave were far less wasted; for they mean real love—and nothing is wasted that means love. So, thinking of that, she would sometimes give her flowers to the scrubwomen who knew every inch of the great hotel on their knees, and to whom no men thought of sending flowers; and, again, she would carry them to some sick friend in a hospital. So, she would say to herself with a rather cynical smile, the flowers were not wasted, after all.

One morning, however, she found waiting on her desk a small package; and, on opening it, she found in it a single rose. It was a very beautiful rose, of a strangely exquisite yellow, seldom seen even in the windows of the great florists, and it was swathed and boxed with evident care. But there was no indication of the sender, no card inclosed—nor did the box bear the label of any Fifth Avenue department store of flowers.

It was the first time that a flower had ever come to her like that. Usually her flowers came to her in huge, tasteless bouquets, in boxes three feet long, a great festoon of satin ribbon tied in foolish loops about their stems. The florist was always the most expensive in New York, and the sender's name was never left a mystery. His foolish handwriting always made that clear, and his name was seldom unaccompanied by some fatuous statement of feelings that he would never have dared to make—except to some girl working for her living, and presumably unprotected by fathers with bank accounts and brothers at Yale.

Of course, all the men she had to deal with were not like that. There were gray, solid, fifty-year-old men, who, she knew at a glance, had daughters of their own; there were clean-built, fresh-skinned, and clear-eyed young men,

who, she knew, had sisters; there were men young and old who, she knew instinctively, by some unmistakable look in their faces, had wives whom they loved. There were also dreaming lads hardly out of college, healthy and sweet, who meant nothing by their frank, yet shy, admiration of her face.

All these she knew and was gladdened by; knowing from them that there were real men in the world. And the mere abrupt business man, who asked her to take down a letter as if she were a machine—exactly as she used her own typewriter—him she knew and liked. It was such a relief to be treated merely as a machine.

Yet, of course, she was a woman, after all, a young and beautiful girl, and that single yellow rose brought back to her the dream that every beautiful girl has dreamed since the beginning of the world.

Was there really somewhere upon the earth the one man who, out of all the beautiful faces of the world, had found her face—the one man seeking the one woman that was she?

Of course, it was only her old fairy tales talking to her. Yet she hesitated as to what she should do with her yellow rose. She would not put it in a glass, and surely not wear it in her bosom; she couldn't, she felt, give it to one of the scrubwomen. As she hesitated, an important masculine presence loomed over her, to dictate a letter—so she slipped the rose quietly into a drawer of her desk.

He had not sent it. That was quite certain. A great, big, kind-hearted, six-foot-three fellow, out of the Far West—and when she had taken down his letter, and he had gone, she half opened the drawer and looked at the rose, and wondered who its sender could be.

Next morning there came another rose—just the same way—and the next morning, and the next. So it went on for seven days, and then came another single rose—rare and delicate as the others, but this time of a wonderful whiteness, silver as the moon.

And the single roses that thus came to her grew to have a meaning to her—

she could not say what; at all events, it was a meaning of something kind toward her in the world. So she neither wore her roses, nor gave them away to scrubwomen or to hospitals, but every day hid them away in the drawers of her desk—till the right-hand side of her desk was filled with hidden roses, which, in the intervals of her work, she would look at—and from which would breathe up to her the fragrance of an unknown devotion.

Long since she had scanned the faces of the men who came and asked her to take down letters or dictated their specifications in the clear-cut prose of the American business man. The men who had sent her those three-foot boxes of flowers with ribbons never left her in any doubt as to the sender. They were always pressing their questioning faces near to hers, to ask—about the fate of their horrible flowers.

But no one came to ask the fate of the one beautiful rose that still continued to come each morning, and carefully, and, indeed, wistfully, as she scanned the hurrying or lingering faces of men, from none of them did she gain a hint of him who each morning sent her that beautiful rose.

So, as time went on, she began to create in her own fancy the unknown man who each morning sent to her the symbol of an admiration that asked nothing in return. Of course, he was young, and strong, and handsome—but it was strange that he should never care to reveal himself. What could be the mysterious reason for that?

Something very like love for her invisible admirer began to grow up in her heart; and, as the roses continued to come each morning, she watched more and more wistfully for the face that thus kept itself hidden; and the faces that she saw grew to be less and less real to her, and the face she dreamed of to become the only reality.

During this time there were men whose devotion to her was manly and honorable, men who asked her hand in marriage, and who could think of nothing more wonderful than to frame her beauty in a fair home, and no joy

comparable to the joy of working for her happiness. But always she shook her golden head; for by this time her heart had been given to him who still each morning sent her that single rose, and whose name it seemed she was never to know.

At length, after many months had gone by, there came a morning when the little, looked-for packet was missing from her desk. On the day after, it was the same, and a whole week went by, yet her rose was missing. Other foolish, heribbioned flowers came, as usual, but she looked in vain for her single rose.

One morning, at last, she knew the reason, and her beautiful young head lay on her desk, as her shoulders shook with sobs, and her tears fell over a letter that had come to her, instead of her rose. Careless of the curious eyes that glanced at her, as men and women passed in and out along the hotel corridor, she cried to herself as if her heart would break. For the man who had sent her that rose each morning was dead.

Here are some of the words that were already blurred with her tears:

I am writing what I have loved you too well to say to your lovely and forever sacred face, and what you could not have borne to listen to from my lips; and I write now because, when you receive this letter, you cannot misunderstand why I write it. To have told you of my love while I was alive might well have seemed an insult. Now, I hope it will not at least seem that.

Perhaps I ought to have been content to have worshiped your beauty, to have revered the purity of spirit I saw behind it, to have understood the courage and goodness of your heart—in silence. Instead, I have sent you each morning since I first saw you, and shall send till I can send it no more—a rose.

If you have wondered at all who sent it, I am rewarded enough. I meant it to come to you simply as the song of a bird might come—to make you happy; and perhaps, too, selfishly to hint to you that there was some one in the world who loved you, but knew himself too well to ask anything in return, but to go on loving you in silence—and as from behind a mask.

Your face has been my altar all these days. To it I have brought all I dared bring to it—a rose.

Had I dared, no words, nor all the music

in heaven, can express the happiness to me of telling you my love, and asking you to share my home and my life—as happier men could do. Yet for such as I, was it not enough to look—yet hardly dare to look—a few moments each day into your eyes, as men gaze into some innocent spring; to be near your fragrance a while, as men stand and dream by a lilac bush in May, and wonder at the sweetness of the world and the goodness of God?

Yes, that was enough, and for all this, dear girl, I thank you; and, when the time comes for this letter to reach you, I shall rest content, remembering—as I must still remember in my grave—your beautiful face; remembering all the dewlike purity and wonder that is you.

The signature to the letter—that of one of the most famous financiers in New York—told her all.

At last, she knew who it had been who had loved her in that strange way—knew, too, in a flash, why he had never told of his love. How could she have guessed—she, whom that morning rose had set dreaming of a tall and handsome youth—that he who had thus loved her in silence all the time had been the strange little twisted creature, with the gentle manners, but with the face like some foolish mask, who had come nearly every day to ask her to take down his letters about steel and stocks, and who would certainly set no one thinking of roses?

He was one of the richest and saddest men in New York. Though for those who knew and loved him his grotesque ugliness was lit up by the interior charm of a noble and tender nature, yet he could never forget that he was what he called himself, "the homeliest man in the world." So conscious was he of his own ugliness that he had never dreamed of marrying, and his sensitiveness and a sad sense of humor had put the idea of his seeking the love of a woman forever from his thoughts.

But the beauty of the young typewriter had charmed and touched him, and the fancy had come to him that,

though love for him was not to be thought of for all his wealth, he might still, without harming her, offer her the silent devotion of that morning rose. And, having foreknowledge, also, that his life was not to be long, he had left to her an inheritance sufficient to save her from sitting in that hotel foyer any longer, to save her from the beribboned bouquets that insulted her purity, and to take her old father and mother to the sunlit southern sea.

"The homeliest man in the world" was buried with that ceremony and concourse of distinguished mourners from which no rich man, however simple his heart in life, can quite escape in death. His coffin was hidden under immense wreaths and bouquets of flowers, festooned with ribbons in professional loops about their stems. The great florists' shops of New York were almost depleted of flowers the morning he was laid in his great marble vault. And, strange to say, most of the flowers were sincere; for many had loved the queer, twisted little man, who had not dared to offer his love to any one; and after he had been left to his peace, well-paid sextons took care that the due flowers of spring and autumn blossomed about his well-kept grave.

To these ministrations I am certain that the dead man pays no heed; but if the dust that has loved, and is still loved, can dream in the darkness, can still hear the footsteps of those that never forget—of this, too, I am certain: that "the homeliest man in the world" is not unaware of the single rose that comes every morning to his grave, as long ago there used to come to the desk of the face that he loved a single rose. And, as she had cared nothing for all the other flowers, so he cares only for that single rose that comes to him every morning, and will come so long as the girl who can never cease to love him shall live to send it.



NO MAN is worth a fig, or can have real benevolence of character, or observe mankind properly, who does not like the society of modest and well-bred women.
—William Makepeace Thackeray.

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LOVE IN FIVE LETTER⁶

Sweet, be not proud of those two eyes,
Which, starlike, sparkle in their skies,
Whenas that ruby which you wear,
Sunk from the tip of your soft ear,
Will last to be a precious stone
When all your wealth of beauty's gone.—ROBERT HERRICK.

Letters exchanged between the Duc de Candal and Madame d'Olonne, in which is revealed one of the minor, but not the least tragic, love intrigues of the court of Louis XIV.

I am in despair, madame, that all declarations of love must, perforce, resemble one another, while there is so vast a difference in the sentiments to be expressed. I know well that I love you far more than another man could, and yet I am incapable of telling you of my affection as well as others have probably done. There, I pray you, give small heed to words which are weak instruments and deceiving, but reflect instead that my attitude toward you has ever been one of devotion. Believe this mute testimony and know that, if I love you so well without being loved by you in return, I would indeed adore you were you to reciprocate my passion.



To this Madame d'Olonne replied:

If there be aught to prevent me from believing your words of love, it is not that you are importunate but that you present your case too well. Deep passion ordinarily begets confusion, and your letter is that of a man in full possession of his senses and not so much in love as desirous of attaining that condition. Since you fail to convince me, much as I desire your words to be true, you may judge for yourself how skeptical others, indifferent to your love, would be. They would surely hold you to be jesting! I, who have no wish to judge hastily, am willing to accept your words at their face value, and to measure your sentiments by your attitude toward me.



This letter, which to another man might have seemed very satisfactory, did not rise to the expectations of the Duc de Candal, who would have pursued his efforts to make the acquaintance of this beautiful woman no farther, had not she herself triumphed over her modesty and declared her love. The liaison which followed this declaration was not without storms. When the Duc de Candal was away fighting Madame d'Olonne wrote:

Alas, am I never to know the happiness of security? Must I always live in fear of losing you either through your death or because you love me no longer? So long as the siege lasts I shall be prey to constant cruel alarm; the enemy does not fire a single shot which I do not imagine to be directed at you. I learn that you have been vanquished in battle without knowing what has become of you, and when, after a thousand mental fears, I hear that you are safe, rumors come that you are unfaithful to me and consoling yourself gayly at Avignon for the misfortunes of war. If that be true I regret that you did not perish at the hands of the enemy. Rather would I have you dead than faithless, for, were you dead,

I might believe that, had you survived, you would have loved me evermore, instead of bearing despair in my heart that I am to be abandoned for another who does not love you as I do.



To which the Duc de Candat, who did, indeed, love Madame d'Olonne profoundly, but who had heard tales of her faithlessness and who was but seeking consolation for her perversity, replied:

Even if you could disprove all the accusations I have heard against you, I would no longer dare to love you. It is a lover's delight to hear the name of his beloved spoken, but I must tremble ignominiously whenever I hear your name mentioned. I am in constant fear lest I learn some tale concerning you more grievous than that which I already know. You merit all the reproaches which an honest man might address to a woman without honor whom he has truly loved. However, I do not shower them upon you, for I do not desire to hear your false self-justification.



Shortly after this the Duc de Candat fell very ill, and on the eve of his death he wrote a last letter to Madame d'Olonne.

If I could die honoring you, I would regret death, but, honoring you no longer, I have no desire to live. Since such merits as I possess together with my passion for you were unable to win your true love, I welcome death which will deliver me from my sorrows. Were you capable of feeling, you could not see the plight in which I am without strangling with sorrow. There is, however, no danger of this. Since, each day, you coldly caused despair to the creature who most loved you in this world, you could, no doubt, witness my death without betraying the slightest emotion.



By Joseph C. Lincoln

Author of
"Mac Pratt"



and
"Cap'n Eri"

Through Fire and Water

PASHY," said Cap'n Perez, turning red and hesitating, "d'yer know what a feller told me 'bout you?"

Cap'n Perez was about to undertake a compliment, and, as he was rather afraid to shoulder the entire responsibility of the same, he prefaced it with the pleasant fiction, "a feller told me."

"No, I'm sure I don't, Perez!" said Miss Patience Doane, smiling sweetly.

"Well, a feller told me that you was the best housekeeper in Orham. He said that the man that got you would be lucky."

Now this was encouraging. The Cap'n had been calling once a week for a year and a half, and never before had he come so near making a sentimental speech. Miss Doane tried her best to blush.

"Land sake!" she said. "Whoever told you such rubbish as that? Besides"—with downcast eyes—"I guess no man would ever want me."

"Oh, I dunno!" The Cap'n moved uneasily in his chair, as if he contemplated hitching it nearer to that occu-

pied by the lady. "I guess there's plenty would be mighty glad ter git yer. Anyhow, there's—there's one that—that— I cal'late the fog's as thick as ever, don't you?"

Well, 'tis a true proverb that tells of faint heart and fair lady. Cap'n Perez had come over to the life-saving station that afternoon, determined to speak and learn his fate. He had told Cap'n Jerry, just before leaving home, that he should "hail her and git his bearin's if he foundered the next minute." But, as usual, his courage had failed him at the critical moment.

The fact is, the Cap'n was overawed by what seemed to him the vast superiority of Miss Doane over all other women. She was a spinster—fair, plump and a bit under forty. Also she was the sister of Cap'n Luther Doane of the life-saving crew and kept house for her brother at the station. Cap'n Perez had grown weary of bachelorhood soon after his friend married the woman from Nantucket, and, when he saw how happy Cap'n Jerry seemed to be in his new partnership, he envied

him. Then Cap'n Eri, the other boarder at the house by the shore, received a flattering offer to go as skipper on a fishing schooner and accepted, so Perez was more lonely than ever.

It was then he met Miss Patience, and struck his colors at the first broadside from her bewitching eyes. Love is like the measles, it goes hard with a man after fifty, and Cap'n Perez was severely smitten. The first time he called on the lady she said, in the course of conversation, that, in her opinion, a man who loved a woman should be willing to go through fire and water to win her. This remark had greatly impressed the Cap'n.

"Fire and water! That's a turrible test, ain't it, Jerry?" he said to his friend. "But she's a wonderful woman and she's wuth it, and would expect it of a feller. That's what makes me so almighty scary. Spos'n' I should ask her and she should say, 'Perez, yer say yer care fer me. Well, then, ter prove it, go out and stick your hand inter the cookstove.' Now, mind yer, I think I'd do it—seems as if I would, now—but flesh is weak and I might flunk. Then she wouldn't have me and there'd be nothin' left ter do but tie an anchor round my neck and jump off the dock. Fire and water! That—that's awful!"

So Cap'n Perez delayed, and Miss Patience found need of a good share of the virtue for which she was named.

The life-saving station at Orham is on what is called the "outer beach," and, except at low water, when one may wade or drive over at the ford, is accessible only by boat. On this particular afternoon the Cap'n had been ferried over by some obliging summer boarders, who landed him a mile or so down the beach. From here he had walked to the home of his adored. He found her alone, for, as it was summer, the crew were off duty, and Captain Doane had gone over to the village on business. It had required no great amount of urging to persuade the infatuated lover to stay to tea, and, that meal being over, the pair were seated in the parlor.

"What was it you was goin' ter say?"

inquired Miss Patience, by way of giving the Cap'n another chance.

"I was goin' ter say, Pashy, that—that—I asked yer if you thought the fog was as thick as ever."

"Oh, dear me! Yes, I s'pose likely it is," sighed the discouraged lady.

"Luther 'll be kind of late home, won't he?"

"Yes, I'm 'fraid he will. I'm glad you're here ter keep me comp'ny. I should be so lonesome if you wa'n't." This was offered as fresh bait.

"Pashy, I've got somethin' I wanted ter ask yer. Do yer think yer could—er—er—"

"What, Perez?"

"I wanted ter ask yer"—the Cap'n swallowed several times—"ter ask yer—What in the nation is that?"

"Oh, that's nothin'; only the hens squawkin'. Go on!"

"Yes, but hens don't squawk this time of night 'thout they have some reason to. It's that fox come back; that's what 'tis!"

Miss Patience, earlier in the evening, had related a harrowing tale of the loss of two of her pet leghorns, that had gone to furnish a Sunday dinner for a marauding fox. As the said leghorns were her pride, and were looked upon as possible prize winners at the Barnstable Cattle Show, even the impending proposal was driven from her mind.

"Oh, Perez! You don't s'pose 'tis the fox, do yer?"

"Yes, ma'am, I do! Where's the gun?"

"Here 'tis, but there ain't a mite of shot in the house. Luther's goin' ter git some ter-day."

"Never mind. I'll pound the critter with the butt. Come quick and bring a lamp."

The noise in the henyard continued, and when they opened the back door, was louder than ever.

"He's in the henhouse," said Miss Patience. "He must have gone in that hole in the side that had the loose board over it."

"All right!" whispered the Cap'n. "You go round with the lamp and open the door. That'll scare him, and I'll

stood at the hole and thump him when he comes out."

So, shielding the lamp with her apron, the proprietress of the outraged leghorns tiptoed around to the henhouse door, while the Cap'n, brandishing the gun like a club, took up his stand by the hole at the side.

Without the lamp the darkness was pitchy. Cap'n Perez, stooping down to watch, saw something coming out of the hole—something that was alive and moved. He swung the gun above his head and, bringing it down with all his force, knocked into eternal oblivion the little life remaining in the finest leghorn rooster.

"Consarn it!" yelled the Cap'n. "I've killed a hen!"

Just then there came a scream from the other side of the henhouse, followed by a crash and the sound of a fall. Running round the corner, the alarmed Perez saw his ladylove stretched upon the ground, groaning dismally.

"Great land of Goshen, Pashy!" he cried. "Are you hurt?"

"Oh, Perez!" gasped the fallen one, "Oh, Perez!"

This pitiful appeal had such an effect upon the Cap'n that he dropped upon his knees and, raising Miss Doane's head in his hands, begged her to say she wasn't killed. After some little time she obligingly complied, and then, having regained her breath, explained the situation.

What had happened was this: The fox, having selected his victim, the rooster, had rendered it helpless and was pushing it out of the hole ahead of him. The Cap'n had struck the rooster just as Miss Patience opened the door, and the fox, seizing this chance for escape, had dodged by the lady, upsetting her as he went.

"Well," she said, laughing, "there's no great harm done. I'm sorry about the rooster, but he was 'most dead, anyhow. Oh, my soul and body! Look there!"

Perez turned, looked as directed, and saw the henhouse in flames.

The lighted lamp, which Miss Patience had dropped when she fell, lay

broken on the floor and the blazing oil had run in every direction. The flames were making such headway that they both saw there was no chance of saving the building. The frightened hens were huddled in the farthest corner, gazing stupidly at the fire.

"Oh, my poor leghorns!" wailed Miss Patience. "Them hens I thought the world of and was goin' ter take a prize with! They'll be all burned up! What shall I do?"

Here the lady began to cry.

"Pashy!" roared the Cap'n, whom the sight of his charmer's tears had driven almost wild. "Pashy, don't say another word! I'll save them hens or git cooked along with 'em!"

And, turning up his coat collar, as if he was going into an ice box instead of a burning henhouse, Cap'n Perez sprang through the door.

Miss Duane screamed wildly to him to come back, and danced about wringing her hands. The interior of the building was now a mass of black smoke, from which the voices of the Cap'n and the leghorns floated in a discordant medley, something like this:

"Hold still, yer lunatics! (squawk! squawk!) Druther be roasted than have me catch yer, hadn't yer? (squawk! squawk!) A-ker-chew! Land! I'm smothered! Now I've got yer! Thunderation! My nose! Hold still! HOLD STILL! I tell yer!"

Just as the agonized spinster was on the point of fainting, the little window at the back of the burning shanty was thrown open and two hens, like feathered comets, shot through it. Then the red face of the Cap'n appeared for an instant at the opening, as he caught his breath with a "Woosh!" and dived back again. This performance was repeated six times, the skipper's language and the compliments he paid the hens becoming more animated every moment.

At length he announced, "That's all, thank goodness;" and began to climb through the window. This was a difficult task, for the window was narrow and the Cap'n was rather wide.

"Catch hold of my hands and haul, will yer, Pashy?" he pleaded. "That's

it! Pull hard! It's gittin' kinder sultry in behind here. I'll never complain at havin' cold feet again if I git out of this. Now, then! Ugh! that's it! Here we be!"

He came out with a "plop" like the cork out of a bottle, and rolled on the sand at his lady's feet.

"Oh, Perez!" she gasped. "Are yer hurt?"

"Nothin' but my feelin's!" growled the rescuer, scrambling upright. "I read a book once by a feller named Joshuway Billin's. He was an ignorant chap—couldn't spell two words right—but he had consider'ble sense. He said a hen was a darn fool, and he was right. She's all that!"

The Cap'n's face was blackened and his clothes were scorched. One side of the rim of gray whiskers which had encircled his face was singed to a ragged stub; but his spirit was undaunted.

"Pashy," he said, "do you realize that if we don't git help, this whole shebang, station and all, will be burned down?"

"Perez, you don't mean it?"

"I won't swear that I don't! Look how that thing's blazin'! There's the barn beyond it, and the station t'other side of that."

"But can't we fight the fire ourselves and keep 'em from catchin'?"

"I wouldn't dare resk it. No, sir! We've got ter git help from the village."

"But won't some of 'em see the fire and come over?"

"Not in this fog. We can't see the Orham lighthouses ourselves. No; I've got ter go right off. Is the hoss all right?"

"Yes; he's all right; but the buggy's over ter the wheelwright's and there's no other kerridge but the old carryall, and that's almost tumblin' ter pieces."

"I was call'in' ter go hossback."

"What! And leave me here alone with the house afire? No, indeed! If you go, I'm goin', too."

They were ready in a few moments. The ramshackle old carryall, dusty and

cobwebbed, was dragged out of the barn and Horace Greeley, the horse, was backed into the shafts. As they drove out of the yard the flames were roaring through the roof of the henhouse and the lathed fence surrounding it was beginning to blaze.

"Everything's so wet," said Cap'n Perez, "owin' ter the rain this mornin', that it'll take some time fer the fire ter git ter the barn. I think we can git help here in time ter save the station, and mebbe more, if we hurry. I'm goin' ter stop at Joel Bixby's house, that's jest t'other side of the ford, and git Joel and his tribe ter come right over while I go on ter rout out more of the neighbors."

"Hurry all yer can, fer the land's sake! Is this as fast as we can go?"

"Fast as we can go with this everlasting Noah's Ark! Heavens, how them wheels squeal! Sounds like one of them things we boys used ter make out of a termatter can and a string and call a hoss-fiddle."

"The axles ain't been greased fer I dunno when! Luther was goin' ter have the old kerridge chopped up fer kindlin' in a week or so."

"Lucky fer us and him 'tain't chopped up now. Git dap, slow poke! Better chop up the hoss while he's about it!" The last remark the Cap'n made under his breath.

"My gracious, how dark it is! Think you can find the ford?"

"Got fer find it, that's all. 'Tis dark, that's a fact."

It was. They had gone but a few hundred yards, yet the fire was already merely a shapeless red smudge on the foggy blackness behind them. Horace Greeley pounded along at a jog, and when the Cap'n slapped him with the end of the reins, broke into a jerky gallop that was slower than the trot.

"Stop your hoppin' up and down!" commanded Perez, whose temper was becoming somewhat frayed. "Yer make me think of the walkin' beam in a steamboat. If yer'd stop tryin' ter fly and go straight ahead we'd do better."

They progressed in this fashion for

some distance. Then Miss Doane, from the curtained depths of the back seat, spoke once more.

"Seems ter me this road's awful rough!" she said. "Ain't we most ter the ford?"

The Cap'n had remarked the roughness of the road. The carryall was pitching from one clump of beach grass to the other, and Horace Greeley had stumbled once or twice.

"Whoa!" commanded the Cap'n. Then he lit a match and, bending forward, scrutinized the ground beneath them. "I'm kind of 'fraid," he said, presently, "that we've got off the road somehow. But we must be 'bout opposite the ford. I'm goin' ter drive down and see if I can't find it."

He turned the horse's head at right angles from the way they had been going, and they pitched onward for another hundred yards. Then they came out upon the hard, smooth sand at the water's edge and heard the ripples lapping on the shore. Then Cap'n Perez got down from his seat and walked along the strand, lighting matches as he went. Soon Miss Patience heard him calling.

"I've found it, I guess," he said, coming back to the carryall. "Anyhow, it looks like it. We'll be over in a few minutes now. Git dap, Thousand Dollars!"

Horace Greeley, gratified, no doubt, by this estimate of his monetary value, waded bravely in. They moved farther from the shore and the water seemed to grow no deeper.

"Guess this is the ford all right," said the Cap'n, who had cherished some secret doubts. "Here's the deep part comin'. We'll be across in a jiffy."

The water mounted to the hubs, then to the bottom of the carryall. Miss Doane's feet grew damp and she drew them up.

"Oh, Perez!" she faltered. "Are you sure this is the ford?"

"Don't git scared, Pashy! I guess maybe we've got a leetle ter one side of the track. I'll turn round and try again."

But Horace Greeley was of a dif-

ferent mind. From long experience, he knew that the way to cross a ford was to go straight ahead; so he kept on. The bottom of the carryall was awash.

"Port yer hellum, yer lubber!" roared the Cap'n, pulling with all his might on one rein. "Heave to! Come about! Gybe! Consarn yer! Gybe!"

Then Horace Greeley tried to obey orders, but it was too late. He endeavored to touch bottom with his forelegs but could not; tried to swim with his hind ones and found that impossible; then wallowed wildly to one side and snapped the rotten whiffletree in two pieces that floated at the ends of the traces. The carryall tipped alarmingly and Miss Patience screamed.

"Whoa!" yelled the agitated Perez. "Vast heavin'! Belay!"

The animal, as much alarmed by his driver's howls as by the water, shot ahead once more and tried to tear himself loose. The carryall was now floating, with the water up to the seats.

"No use! I'll have ter cut away the wreck or we'll be on our beam ends," shouted the Cap'n.

He took out his jackknife and reaching over, cut the straps that held the horse to the shafts. Horace Greeley gave another wallow, and, finding himself free, disappeared in the darkness amid a lather of foam. The carriage, now well out in the channel, drifted with the current.

"Don't cry, Pashy!" said the Cap'n, endeavoring to cheer his sobbing companion. "We ain't shark bait yit. As the song used ter say, 'We're afloat, we're afloat, and the river is free!' I've shipped aboard almost every kind of craft," he added, "but blessed if I ever expected ter be skipper of a carryall!"

But Miss Patience, shut up in the back part of the carriage like a water nymph in her cave, still wept spasmodically. So Cap'n Perez continued:

"The main thing is ter keep on an even keel. Kneel on the seat, and if she teeters ter one side you teeter ter t'other. I think we're carryin' too much sail"—as a faint gust tipped the carriage a trifle. "Let's take a reef in some of them curtains."

So, after some trouble and many screams from Miss Patience, the curtains were furled and the carryall, as its commander said, "scudded under bare poles."

"We're driftin' somewhere," continued the Cap'n. "But we're spinnin' round so that I can't tell which way. We're floatin' with the tide, and that's either jest finishin' goin' out or jest beginnin' ter come in. I remember now," he added, more soberly; "I looked at the clock jest as we was goin' after that confounded fox, and 'twas eight then. Tide's still goin' out."

"Oh, dear! then we'll drift inter the breakers at the mouth of the bay and be drowned, won't we?"

"Oh, no, I guess not!" was the undaunted answer. "There's many a slip between the cup and the coffee pot. We ain't dead yit. If I could git an oar or somethin' ter steer this clipper with mebbe we could git inter shoal water. As 'tis, we'll have ter manage her the way Ote Wixon used ter say he managed his wife—by lettin' her have her own way."

They floated on in silence for some time. Then Miss Patience said:

"What should I have done without you, Perez?"

"Huh! Guess you'd been better off. Yer wouldn't have gone after that fox by yerself and then there wouldn't have been none of this trouble."

"Oh, don't say that! You've been a hero. What a night this has been."

"Well, 'tis kinder unique, as yer might say. When I come over I didn't expect ter put in my time chuckin' chickens out of a red-hot henhouse and then goin' ter sea in a carryall."

The fog grew lighter about them. It was still as thick as ever, but a kind of brightness shone through it.

"Moon's riz," said the Cap'n. "'Member when I took yer out rowin' last summer, Pashy? 'Twas moonlight then."

"So 'twas, Perez"—with a sigh—"but 'twas so diff'rent from this."

It would have been somewhat surprising had it not been different. Now Miss Patience, wet and draggled, was

perched on the back seat, with her feet drawn up under her. The Cap'n, even more dilapidated and showing marks of the fire, roosted in a similar fashion on the front seat. The water slopped and splashed just beneath them.

"Do you ever think of that time, Pashy?"

"Oh, often, Perez!"

Perhaps the events of the evening had served to fortify the Cap'n's courage. At any rate, he performed a deed of valor; for reaching across the space between the seats, he took and held Miss Patience's hand.

"Ah hum!" sighed the lady.

"Ah hum!" sighed the Cap'n.

Then the latter had another surprising attack of bravery.

"Don't yer think, Pashy," he stammered, "that mebbe yer wouldn't be quite so lonesome if yer sot here on the seat with—with me?"

Miss Doane opined that, perhaps, she wouldn't be so lonesome there, so, after a great deal of splashing and screaming, the transit was accomplished. The Cap'n was actually sitting upon the same seat as his heart's desire. He had often dreamed of something like it, though never in quite these surroundings. He tried to think of something appropriate to say, but could only murmur that it was a "kinder rough v'yage."

"Yes," said Miss Patience. "But it's nice in a time like this ter have some one with yer that—that yer—that yer know will look out fer yer, Perez."

Then another wonderful thing happened. The Cap'n's arm dropped—dropped from the back of the seat and rested about where Miss Doane's apron strings were tied. She did not seem to notice this, although the Cap'n looked guilty.

"The—the v'yage of life," said Cap'n Perez, hitching about as though afflicted with St. Vitus' dance, "is sorter rough in places, ain't it? Seems ter me 'twould be kind of nice ter have somebody with yer all the time ter—ter—Pashy, I'm goin' ter ask yer somethin'. I know it's sudden, but—will—you—Breakers! by Jiminy!"

If the couple had not been so absorbed by their dialogue they would, before this, have noticed that the carryall was rocking more than it had hitherto. Now it gave a most alarming heave and there were streaks of white foam about it. It grounded, swung clear, and tipped yet more.

"We're capsizing!" yelled the skipper. "Hang onter me, Pashy!"

But Miss Doane did not intend to be disappointed this time. As she told her brother afterward, she would have made him say it had they been "two fathom under water."

"What was you goin' ter ask me, Perez?" she demanded.

The skipper turned and caught his breath. The carryall rose on two wheels and began to turn over.

"Pashy Doane," roared the Cap'n, "will you marry me?"

"I will!" screamed Miss Patience, and they went under together.

The Cap'n staggered to his feet and dragged his chosen bride to hers. The water reached their shoulders. And then, as they stood there, the fog, which had grown gradually thinner, rose all round like a curtain. The light of Orham village showed in the distance, surprisingly far away with the lanterns in the twin lighthouses gleaming like planets. The waters of the inner bay shone in the moonlight, and there behind them, not a quarter of a mile from where they stood, were the buildings of the life-saving station they had quitted a short time before. And the buildings did not appear to be on fire.

The Cap'n and Miss Patience walked through the swift current and insignificant surf to the beach. The tide had not been going out, but was coming in, and instead of drifting out to the great breakers at the mouth of the bay, they had been carried into the narrows at the entrance to the inlet and upset in the tide race right at their own door.

"But I swan that clock said eight!" vowed the Cap'n, as they hurried up to the house.

"Oh, I know!" exclaimed Miss Patience. "Wa'n't it the dinin'-room clock you looked at?"

"Yes."

"Well, that clock ain't been goin' fer a week. It's broke."

Neither the station nor the barn had caught fire. The back of the latter was heaped high with damp seaweed that Captain Doane intended using as fertilizer, and when the flames reached that they had simply burned themselves out. When the Cap'n and his lady reached the gate there was Horace Greeley waiting for them.

"Well, by jings!" said the Cap'n. "We've had all our fuss fer nothin'!"

"Oh, not fer nothin', Perez!" said Miss Patience, looking tenderly up into his face.

"Well, no! not fer nothing, by a good deal!" cried the exultant swain. "I've got you by it and that's everything. But, say, Pashy!" he added, fingering his burned whiskers and looking down at his dripping clothing. "I went through fire and water ter git yer!"

THERE cannot be a surer proof of a low origin or of an innate meanness of disposition than to be always talking and thinking of being genteel.—*William Haslitt.*

Who has not heard how great, strong men have an affinity for tender, little women: how tender, little women are attracted by great, strong men?—*William Makepeace Thackeray.*

BETTER than man doth woman understand children, but man is more childish than woman.

IN the true man there is a child hidden; it wanteth to play. Up, then, ye women, and discover the child in man!—*Friedrich Nietzsche.*



THE BALLADE OF DEAD LADIES

From the French of Francois Villon

To woman it has been given to dominate and enchant man merely by the form of her body, her smiles, and the power of her glance. Her irresistible domination escapes from her, surrounds us, and subdues us, without our being able to resist or to struggle against it, when she belongs to the great tempters of the race. Some of them dominate the history of the world, diffusing over their times a poetic and disquieting charm.

When we think of the charming dead: of those of ancient history clothed in flowing robes—of those of the middle ages, *coiffée du grand hennin*, whom Michelet shows us, of those who made the courts of our kings so delightful, we are constrained to murmur the sweet, sad ballade of Villon.—*Guy de Maupassant.*

TELL me now in what hidden way is
Lady Flora, the lovely Roman?
Where's Hipparchia, and where is Thais,
Neither of them the fairer woman?
Where is Echo, beheld of no man,
Only heard on river and mere—
She whose beauty was more than human?—
But where are the snows of yesteryear?

Where's Héloïse, the learnèd nun,
For whose sake Abeilard, I ween,
Lost manhood and put priesthood on?
From love he won such dule and teen!
And where, I pray you, is the queen
Who willed that Buridan should steer
Sewed in a sack's mouth down the Seine?—
But where are the snows of yesteryear?

White Queen Blanche, like a queen of lilies,
With a voice like any mermaid's,
Bertha Broadfoot, Beatrice, Alice,
And Ermengarde, the lady of Maine,
And that good Joan whom Englishmen
At Rouen doomed, and burned her there—
Mother of God, where are they, then?—
But where are the snows of yesteryear?

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Except with this for an overword—
But where are the snows of yesteryear?

Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

by
Rafael Sabatini

Author of

"Scaramouche"



The
FORTUNES OF LAL FAVERSHAM
I. LOADED DICE

WHERE is the man who deems himself loyal that can ponder with heart unmoved upon the indignities whereunto my liege and master, the Second Charles, was subjected during that year of his mock-kingship in Scotland? A king in name, surrounded by the outward pomp of kings, but beset by spies, and less a king than the meanest knave of the Kirk Commission that ruled and made a vassal of him.

How it befel that when in their purgation—as they called it—they banished from his court the noble Hamilton, Lauderdale, Callender and all those others whom they dubbed malignants, they should have left me beside him doth pass my understanding. For verily—to use another of their words—besides the malignancy, which quality those irreverent dogs assigned to the loyal party to which I had the honor to belong, they might in me have noted a malignancy of another sort—and one which I was never at any pains to dissemble—a deep-seated malignancy to-

wards themselves and all that concerned their infernal covenant.

Did the King play at cards on a Sabbath he was visited by a parcel of sour-faced ministers, who preached to him through their noses touching the observance of the Lord's Day, while did they but hear of his having chucked a maid under the chin, they thundered denunciations upon his reprobate head and poured forth threats of exchanging his throne for a cutty stool.

It is, therefore, matter for scant wonder that when on that September evening the Marquess of Argyle came to Perth Castle, his ill-favored countenance monstrous sober and dejected, to acquaint His Majesty with the Scotch disaster at Dunbar, instead of the outburst of grief which he had looked for:

"Oddsfish!" quoth Charles, with a hard laugh. "I protest I am glad of it!"

"Sire!" cried in reproach the dismayed M'Callum More.

"Well, what now?" the King demanded, coldly, while his fiery black

eyes flashed such a glance upon the covenanted marquess that he fell abashed and recalled, mayhap, some lingering memory of the respect he owed his King.

For a moment Charles stood surveying him, then turning on his heel and signing to Buckingham to attend him, he passed into the adjoining chamber, where, I afterwards learned, he fell on his knees, and, for all that Cromwell was his father's murderer and his own implacable enemy, he rendered thanks unto God for the Scotch destruction.

A dead silence followed the King's departure. My Lord Wilmot exchanged smiles with Sir Edward Walker; Cleveland and Wentworth looked at each other significantly, whilst the Marquis de Villaneuffe, who stood beside me, put his lips to my ear to whisper:

"Observe milord Argyle's countenance."

And truly the scowl the marquess wore was an ominous sight. Sir John Gillespie approached him at that moment and they spoke together in low tones. Presently they were joined by Mr. Wood, of the Kirk Commission, who had also heard His Majesty's rash words, and as I gazed upon the three in conversation a feeling that was near akin to dread took possession of me—'twas, perchance, a premonition of that which was to follow, of a harvest whose seeds I make no doubt were sown in that consultation.

A gayly dressed young man approached me, and hailed me in words more attuned to my tastes and calling.

"Will you throw a main at hazard, Mr. Faversham?"

I looked into the lad's face—a smooth, girlish face it was, set in a frame of golden love locks—and for a second I hesitated. He was not rich, and in two nights he had lost a thousand crowns to me. The thing was, methought, well nigh dishonest, but he spoke of the *révanche* I owed him, and to that I could but answer that I was his servant.

And so we got to table, and for an hour my Lord Goring and I played at hazard, fortune favoring me, who

scorned her for once. 'Tis ever thus with fortune—a shameless jade that hath most smiles for him who flouts her.

At the end of an hour Lord Goring proposed that we should change the game to passage, and this we did, yet the blind goddess was no kinder to him.

One by one, those who stood about took their departure, and presently we had the chamber to ourselves, save for Sir John Gillespie, who came to stand behind Lord Goring's chair and watch the play.

The poor boy sat with a white face, his lips compressed and his eyes a-burning, striving to win as men strive against death, and damning every throw. As midnight struck he at last pushed back his chair.

"I'll play no more to-night, an' it please you, Mr. Faversham," said he in a voice which his breeding vainly strove to render indifferent.

"Mr. Faversham is truly a formidable opponent," quoth Sir John. "He hath learned much in France."

There was that in the voice of this covenanting creature and kinsman of Argyle that I disliked, yet left unheeded. I rose, and expressing polite regrets at his lordship's persistent ill luck, I pocketed a hundred crowns. Five times that paltry sum it might have been had I so willed it.

I had hoped that Gillespie's remark touching the much that I had learned in France might have proved an admonition to my Lord Goring, and led him to play thereafter with some opponent whose skill was on a level with his own. Not so, however; the boy was blind to the fact that I was his master, and attributed his losses to luck alone.

In this fashion things continued for a week, until in the end naught was talked of but Lord Goring's losses and Lionel Faversham's winnings. Men gathered round the table to watch our play—Sir John Gillespie ever in the foremost rank—and my luck grew at length to be a proverb.

One day, at last, His Majesty drew me aside with a smile that had something serious in it.

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"Lal," quoth he, laying his hand upon my shoulder, "had I half your luck I should be King of England now. But if you love me, Lal, you'll play no more—leastways, not at the castle. You know my position; you know the crassness of this Kirk Commission. We shall have them denouncing my court from the pulpit as a gaming house, and assigning to that cause the loss of the battle of Dunbar."

"My liege," I exclaimed, "forgive me—"

"Nay, nay," he laughed. "'Tis I who crave forgiveness for inconveniencing you with such a request—but there is the Kirk Commission." And His Majesty added something under his breath; perchance, it was a prayer.

I was glad of so stout an excuse when next Lord Goring approached me with his daily invitation. But Sir John Gillespie was at hand to propose that, if we were anxious to pursue our amusement, there was the hostelry of the Rose in the High Street.

I might have asked this Presbyterian hound what interest of his it was that made him urge us to follow a pursuit at war with his religion. But my position, as you may see, was grown somewhat delicate, and it would ill become me to evince reluctance to play with my Lord Goring.

And so it befel that two nights thereafter we were installed—Goring and I—in a cheerful room on the first floor of the hostelry of the Rose. With us came his grace of Buckingham and a party of gentlemen who sat down to lansquenet in the adjoining room, and besides these there was the unavoidable Sir John.

He played not at lansquenet, but stood at Goring's elbow—like Satan, methought, watching a tempted victim. Truth to tell, I had conceived the notion that Sir John was plotting something against either Goring or myself, and I had a monstrous inclination that night to pick a quarrel with him. I had thereafter cause to repent that I obeyed not that prompting.

The mischief chanced upon the following night. Again Buckingham and

his friends were in the adjoining chamber, the door of which stood open, so that from where we sat we could see them by the mere raising of our eyes. Sir John lolled in a chair beside us watching Lord Goring lose, and wearing a sardonic grin upon his lean, saturnine countenance.

The hour waxed late; the candles were burning low, and my wits grew dull with the vapors of the sack I had drunk; but for that circumstance mayhap I had coped better with that which followed.

Of a sudden, Goring flung the box down with an oath, and sprang to his feet so violent and clumsily as to upset his chair, which fell with a crash behind him. Through the open door I saw Buckingham turn his head, and I heard his laugh and his words:

"'Tis but Faversham's luck, gentlemen."

'Twas the first time Goring had been betrayed into so unseemly a display of temper, and it surprised me all the more considering that his losses that night did not amount to fifty crowns, while at other times he had risen with a smile from a table at which he had payed me hundreds.

"In the future, Master Faversham, you may play with the devil," said he.

Now, in my cups I am the sweetest-tempered fellow living, and but for the bottles of sack that I had emptied I should have been sorely put to it to have slit his lordship's nose for those words. As it was I did but laugh, and then before I had recovered—for sack maketh a man's laugh long-drawn—Sir John stood up, and:

"Will you throw a man at passage with me, Mr. Faversham?" said he. "I am curious to break a lance with this wondrous luck of yours."

"My lord here proposes I should play the devil," I answered, with a hiccough. "Well, I take it the devil is much the same as a Presbyterian, so come on, Sir John."

He darted a venomous glance at me, and drew up his chair. It never occurred to me how strange a thing it was that this pillar of the sober, virtu-

ous Kirk should play at passage, and for that thoughtlessness again I blame the sack.

Goring set his elbows on the table, and with his chin in his hands he watched us.

Sir John gathered the dice into the box, and handed it to me. I threw; he threw; I threw again, I passed, and won the five gold caroluses he had staked. We began again, and ended in like fashion.

"Come now, Sir John," I cried, "confess 'tis more diverting than a sermon. It thrills you more, doth it not, Sir Jack? Aye, rat me, it——"

I checked myself suddenly, and gazed in fascination at his forefinger and thumb, 'twixt which he was balancing one of the dice that I had just thrown. For a second he held it steady; then slowly, but surely and fatally it turned. My first thought was that the sack had made me dizzy and a prey to illusions; but Goring's words, hissed into my ear, told me otherwise.

"You blackguard!" he said, and what with the wine and my bewilderment I had not the wit to strike him down, but sat, with mouth agape, staring at Gillespie. At length the Scotchman spoke.

"So! we have discovered the secret of your good fortune, Master Faversham," and with a gesture of ineffable disgust, he flung the loaded cube onto the board. At that I found my voice.

"The secret, Sir John!" I cried struggling to rise. But he pushed me back into my chair.

"Hush, sir," he answered, "or those others will hear you. I do not seek your disgrace."

"Disgrace!" I echoed. "Damn me, Sir Jack—Sir Jack Presbyter—you shall answer to me——"

"Be silent," he commanded, so sharply that despite myself I obeyed him. "Attend to me, sir. I shall answer to you for nothing. My sword is for men of honor—not for discovered cheats, men who play with loaded dice. Nay, keep your hands still! If you so much as draw an inch of your sword, I'll call my Lord Buckingham and

those other gentleman, and show them these dice. Lord Goring can bear witness to the service they have been put to."

I sat back in my chair, and the sweat came out upon my brow while my wine-clogged brain strove vainly to unriddle me this desperate situation.

"Lord Goring," quoth Sir John, pointing to a side table, "will you favor me with that inkhorn and pen?"

His lordship brought him the things, whereupon having found a strip of paper, Sir John set himself to write, while I watched him like one in a dream.

"What is it you do?" I asked at length, and in answer he set before me the paper, whereon I read, with some difficulty and no little horror, the following:

I, Lionel Faversham, do hereby confess and declare that on the evening of the tenth of September, of the year of our Lord 1658, while playing at hazard and passage with my Lord Goring and Sir John Gillespie, at the hotel of the Rose in the High Street, Perth, did with the nefarious intent to plunder the said gentlemen, make use of loaded dice, at which foul practice I was discovered by Sir John Gillespie in the presence of my Lord Goring. In witness whereof I do hereunto set my hand.

"Sign," commanded Sir John, in answer to my glance of inquiry; and he offered me the pen.

"Sign!" I echoed, aghast. "Are you mad, Sir John?"

"Sign!" he repeated.

Ah, 'tis easy to say now what I should have done. I should have upset the table and kicked Sir John down stairs. But so befuddled was I 'twixt sack and the dread of public dishonor that I did neither of these things.

"Sir John," I protested, "I swear 'tis a lie—a vile, monstrous lie. If the dice be clogged indeed, then we have both used them so; how they came here I know not. But we have both used them, I say."

He laughed harshly and pointed to the pile of gold at my elbow—some sixty or seventy crowns, there may have been.

"Yet you alone contrived to win," he sneered. "You, who in the past week

have won thousands from Lord Goring. Come, Master Faversham, sign."

"Not I," I answered, stubbornly.

Sir John stood up.

"I fear, Mr. Faversham, you do not realize the gravity of your position. Unless you forthwith sign that paper, I shall be compelled to call hither his grace of Buckingham, and those with him, and make this matter public. There lie the dice, there the money you have won, and here my Lord Goring, a witness. Perchance, you can picture what must follow."

I could indeed! And I grew cold at the contemplation of it. In my imagination I beheld myself already disgraced, dismissed from court, and—worse than all—dishonored for life.

"If I sign," I inquired, huskily, "what use will you make of it?"

"None, given that you comply with my demands, and that they have also Lord Goring's approval."

"They are?"

"That you never again touch either dice box or cards, and that you return to Lord Goring the moneys you have won from him during the past week. On such conditions I am content to keep the matter secret. Are you agreed, my lord?"

His lordship nodded.

"But, gentlemen," I protested, "I swear by honor——"

"The honor of a man who uses loaded dice," sneered Gillespie. "Have done, sir, and sign."

In despair, I snatched up the pen, and set my name to that bond of infamy. No sooner was it done than, quickly, as though fearing I might repent of it, Gillespie seized the paper and signed to Lord Goring to collect the crowns that I had won from him as honestly as ever crowns were won at play.

I awakened next morning with a dull, aching head, sorely harassed moreover by that which had befallen at the Rose. At first I was beset by rage that I had allowed myself to sign so damnable a document. But anon, when I gave more sober thought to it, I realized indeed that no alternative had been left

me. My character itself was one that could not have borne so heinous a charge. I was known—among other attributes—for a desperate gamester, and one indeed who well-nigh lived upon his wits at play. For saving the pittance which His Majesty allowed me, I was as penniless a fortune hunter as any of his followers—the Parliament having stripped my father of his last acre of land. Further, my fortune at play—wedded to my skill—had of late bordered upon the miraculous, all of which would give *traisemblance* to Gillespie's accusation.

I had taken a morning draught of muscadine and eggs when some one tapped at my chamber door, and Giles—my body servant—admitted Sir John Gillespie. I sent Giles on an errand that was like to keep him absent for an hour or so, then turned to my visitor.

"Are we alone?" asked Gillespie.

"Quite," I answered.

"Mr. Faversham," said he. "You no doubt are harassed by the recollection of the paper you signed last night?"

"Need you ask, sir?"

"And were the opportunity afforded you of regaining possession of that scrap of paper, you would eagerly avail yourself of it, eh?"

"Again, need you ask?"

"Well, Mr. Faversham, I am come to bargain with you. There is something that you can obtain for me, and in exchange for that something you shall have your document."

"Name it," I cried, eagerly. "What is this something?"

"The King," he answered, coolly.

"The King?" I echoed. "I don't understand."

"The King. Charles Stuart. Let me explain, Mr. Faversham. You were present some nights ago when this misguided young malignant protested that he was glad the Scotch were destroyed at Dunbar. Well, sir, those words have rankled; not with me alone, but with other eminent members of the state. On the same night a letter from Charles Stuart to the Duke of Hamilton was intercepted, wherein there were such

things as no covenanter could suffer even from a king. 'Tis to him, this accursed prince, to his debaucheries and those of the blasphemous libertines about him that we assign our destruction. 'Tis his godless, malignant ways that have drawn the wrath of the Lord upon our heads."

"Forbear, Sir John!" I thundered, unable to brook more of this. "You are a traitor."

"Better to be a traitor to an evil King of earth than a traitor to the King of Heaven," answered the fanatic, rising. "Hear me out, Mr. Faversham. We are resolved—I and some other humble instruments of the Lord—to rid Scotland of this impious prince. The sectary Cromwell clamors for him; on his head, then, be the boy's blood. To Cromwell we shall deliver him. But the majority in kirk and the Parliament, I grieve to say, are averse to this, and so strategy is needed. The Lord hath set a weapon in my hand; that fool of a lordling whose money you have won was in despair at his losses and his debts. Cromwell offers no less than three thousand pounds for the worthless person of Charles Stuart; with those three thousand pounds I have bribed Lord Goring. I paid him that sum of money yesterday, in advance, for his help to fuddle you with sack, and to bear witness that you had played with the loaded dice which I, myself, set upon the table."

"Slife!" I cried, beside myself with rage. "Call you such lying, deceitful knavery consistent with your religion—your instrument of the Lord!"

Sir John smiled coldly.

"The end justified the means."

"And, by God, the end shall justify me for slitting your throat!" I sprang toward my sword as I spoke, but ere I could reach it Sir John had leveled a pistol at me.

"Sit down, you fool," he snarled, "or I'll blow your brains about the chamber."

I resumed my seat. What alternative had I?

"Now, sir," he proceeded, "I duped you because I have need of you. You

are intimate with Charles Stuart. More than once have you been his companion upon some escapade of infamy; his mentor upon some debauched enterprise. You must be so again to-morrow night. Lure him from the castle—I care not upon what plea or pretext. But see that by ten o'clock you have him at the corner of the High Street and Maiden Lane."

Loud and long and derisively did I laugh when he had done.

"Out of my sight, you cur, you son of a race of curs!" I cried at last. "You do well to hold a pistol in front of you while you come upon this Judas errand."

He rose calm and unruffled.

"I am going," he said, coolly, "to lay the paper you signed last night before the King. Thereafter I shall lay it before the Kirk Commission, together with certain knowledge that I have of your late connection with James Graham, Earl of Montrose. Ah! you change color, eh? By Heaven, 'tis not without cause, for methinks I have conjured up for you an unpleasant picture—first dishonor, then the hangman. I have you in the hollow of my hand, Mr. Faversham. If I but tighten my grip I crush you, and tighten my grip I will unless you obey me."

Of what avail to detail further this painful scene of a man thus tortured by fears—not of death alone, but of dishonor? I still resisted, but more and more feebly, until in the end—shame on me that I must write it—I agreed to do his bidding.

I was to bring the King in a chair. In the High Street, at the corner of Maiden Lane, Sir John would meet me, and after assuring himself that 'twas indeed the King whom I had brought he would hand me the paper.

"For the rest," quoth he, "you will yourself see the futility of playing me any tricks. Warn the King, or denounce me to the Parliament, and I have but to produce this document to prove that you sought by a lie to destroy a man who holds such a piece of evidence against you. And see that you come alone, for I shall take precau-

tions, a false yo ferer."

"He afoot. losses, of what nothing to you, do not And the day side, an merry ing nig Waterg for a f ness of eagerly and I of my whereo On was in it in op that ni Waterg was pr later to "You ersham nwer. Gori not se Rose. evening prey to in upo bloods! He clo be dre leather heavy, upon t gold. Deer I watc "Mr ing ho am co repara in the pounds lespie

tions, and if in any way you play me false you yourself will be the only sufferer."

"What of Goring?" I inquired.

"He has no knowledge of what is afoot. The fool was desperate with his losses, but even should he repent him of what befell last night, he dare say nothing for his own sake. Good-day to you, Mr. Faversham; see that you do not fail me."

And so it came to pass that during the day I found myself at the King's side, and I proposed to afford him right merry entertainment if on the following night he would go with me to the Watergate. His Majesty, ever ready for a frolic that would relieve the dullness of his Scotch kingship, assented eagerly. And thus the thing was done, and I was left a prey to the tortures of my conscience for the foul work whereon I was embarked.

On the following day Charles, who was in the best of humors, mentioned it in open court that he and I were bent that night upon an adventure to the Watergate. Sir John Gillespie, who was present, approached me a moment later to whisper in my ear:

"You have chosen wisely, Mr. Faversham," whereunto I returned no answer.

Goring was not there; indeed, I had not seen him since the affair at the Rose. But towards seven o'clock that evening while I sat in my chamber a prey to misery untold, he suddenly burst in upon me. He was pale, his eyes bloodshot, and his looks disordered. He closed the door and coming forward he drew from beneath his cloak two leathern bags that looked monstrous heavy, and which, as he set them down upon the table, gave forth the chink of gold.

Deeply marveling, yet saying naught, I watched him.

"Mr. Faversham," he began, speaking hoarsely and with averted eyes, "I am come to very humbly make what reparation is in my power. There are in these bags some three thousand pounds that I received from John Gillespie to aid him dupe you the night

before last at the Rose. For duped you were, Mr. Faversham—the clogged dice came out of Gillespie's pocket. The money, sir, is more yours than mine;—at least, I will have none of it; dispose of it as you think fit. Your pardon, Mr. Faversham, I dare not crave. My offense is too hideous. But should you demand satisfaction I shall be happy to render it."

I sat in my chair and eyed the broken fool. Calmly and coldly I eyed him. Oddslife! Here was something the cunning Sir John had not reckoned with.

"Are you prepared, my lord," I inquired, sternly, at length, "to come with me to the King and make a full confession?"

He shrank back, turning a shade paler.

"No, no!" he cried. "I dare not. It means disgrace and dishonor."

"Doth the paper in Ruthven's possession mean less to me?" I demanded, coldly. "You spoke of rendering me satisfaction."

"The satisfaction of arms, I meant," he explained, timidly.

"Think you 'twill avail my honor aught to kill you?" I asked, with a contemptuous laugh. Matters, it seemed, were not mended after all. Then in a flash there came to me, I know not whence, an inspiration.

"How came you hither?" I inquired, abruptly.

"How? By the south gallery."

"Did you meet no one?"

"None but the guard at the castle gate. Why do you ask?"

"Why? Because I would not have it known," I cried, facing him with arms akimbo, "that I have been closeted with a man charged with high treason, and for whose arrest there is a warrant."

"My God! What do you mean?" he gasped, in pitiful affright.

"Mean, you fool? That next time you link yourself with a knave of Gillespie's kidney and enter with him upon a villainous enterprise, you first ascertain what be the real business that is afoot. Pah! my lord, you have set a noose about your handsome neck."

"Mr. Faversham," he wailed, "I beseech you to explain."

And explain I did, but with many reservations and modifications that rendered my meaning at times obscure, how the money that Gillespie had paid him was from Cromwell for the person of the King. I showed him how he had made himself a party to a betrayal that fortunately was discovered, and for which Gillespie lay already under arrest. So full of terror did I strike him with the picture I drew of the disgrace and ignominious death that awaited him, that in the end he groveled before me, clasped my knees, and besought me to save him by bearing witness to the truth.

"And thereby bring suspicion upon myself, and risk my own neck?" I sneered. "Not I. But attend to me, Lord Goring, I can smuggle you out of the castle and out of Perth if I so choose, and this much I—who am convinced of your innocence of treason—am willing to do."

"Oh, thanks! A thousand thanks, my preserver, my—"

"Get up, you fool," I broke in harshly. "Come, let me look at you. Yes, you will do. Your figure is much of the King's height, and you may thank Heaven also that your shape is similar to his, for to-night you will have to impersonate the King."

I explained my meaning fully, and to all that I proposed he eagerly concurred, for truly he deemed himself a drowning man, and the business I suggested was his straw.

Bidding him on no account quit my chamber, I left him to go in quest of Giles. To my ready-witted servant I made known my wants, and the outcome of it was that by nine o'clock we had tricked out his lordship in a suit of black with gold lace borrowed from His Majesty's wardrobe. His golden locks we concealed 'neath a ponderous black wig that was the very counterpart of His Majesty's hair; his creamy white skin we stained with walnut juice to the gypsy tint of the King's complexion. With a burnt cork Giles drew him a pair of long black eyebrows, so that in

the end he looked not at all like Lord Goring and sufficiently like Charles Stuart to play by night the part I assigned to him. And when we had given him a cloak, and he had flung it across his shoulders so that it masked his chin and mouth, his resemblance to the King was wondrous true.

Moreover, his lordship was an able mimic and entering into the spirit of the business, he assumed before us such characteristic attitudes of Charles that he must needs be lynx-eyed who could see through the deception, particularly when considered that 'twould but be seen in the fitful light of torch or lantern.

It wanted a quarter to ten when we quitted my room, and going by the south gallery we made our way—Goring and I—to the King's apartments. His Majesty being, as I had conjectured, still at supper, the antechamber was empty and but dimly lighted. But I had scarcely pushed my companion into the embrasure of a window when the sound of steps and voices announced the King's approach.

I sprang forward as he entered.

"So you are here, Lal?" he exclaimed. "I was marveling at your absence from the table."

"Sire," I whispered hurriedly, "I beseech you bid your attendants wait without, and permit me to close the door."

He looked up in surprise, but there was that in my voice that impelled him to grant my request.

"Why, what folly is this, Lal?" said he when the door was shut.

"Sire, I pray you ask me no questions now. There is to be no entertainment to-night at the Watergate. But if your Majesty will enter your chamber, and see no one until my return, I promise you a narrative of ample entertainment."

Naturally, he was inquisitive, but I urged him so, and spoke so fearfully of a matter where lives were involved that in the end he consented to do my will, and I held his chamber door for him.

"Now, my lord," I whispered, draw-

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ing Goring from his hiding place. "Play the King, and you are saved."

We crossed the antechamber; then as I held wide the door, and those without bowed low before him, I was astounded to hear what was for all the world the King's voice issue from the folds of his cloak.

"Oddsfish, Lal, 'tis a mad conceit!" He inclined his head to the throng of unsuspecting courtiers and strode on before me.

In the courtyard, before entering his chair, he must needs sniff the air, and for the benefit of those assembled.

"Oddsfish, Lal," he cried in the voice of Charles, "the air is chill." Then to the bearers who stood waiting, "Step on apace, my good fellows," quoth he.

Chancing to turn as the chair was lifted, I beheld Gillespie watching us from the gate, and I was glad that Goring had spoken.

It was a bright, moonlight night, and the chair swung rapidly along. I stalked beside it down the High Street, Sir John following, some fifty yards behind. As we reached the corner of Maiden Lane, half a dozen men

emerged from the by-street and stood there while we passed, then started to follow. I fell behind, and a moment later Ruthven was beside me.

"You have done wisely, Mr. Faversham," he sneered. "There is your paper. You had best see to the saving of your own neck."

With that piece of advice he left me, and for some moments I watched the little procession as it moved toward the Watergate. I glanced at the paper, and by the light of the moon I could make out that it was the document I had signed at the Rose. Then I turned and ran every foot of the way back to the castle.

I entertained His Majesty that evening with a narrative of what had taken place, with, however, certain slight alterations that I held necessary, and whose purport it is not difficult to guess.

Nor is it difficult to imagine what befel when Sir John Gillespie discovered what manner of king it was he was bearing to Cromwell. A warrant was issued next day for his arrest. But he was not seen again in Perth; nor was my Lord Goring.



THE BEST men talk of women as though they were horses.—*Julian Sturgis.*



THERE was never a simple woman since Eve. The best women manage us for our good—the worst for our ill! The ends are different but the means the same.—*Julian Sturgis.*



LET man fear woman when she loveth; then maketh she every sacrifice, and everything else she regardeth as worthless. Let man fear woman when she hateth; for man in his innermost soul is merely evil; woman, however, is mean.—*Friedrich Nietzsche.*



I HAVE an utter aversion to bluestockings. If she has read anything I have written, I cut her acquaintance immediately. I would have her read my soul; she should understand the language of the heart; she should know what I am, as if she were another self. She should love me for myself alone. I like myself without any reason: I would have her do so, too.—*William Haslitt.*

by
Grace Stair
Author of "The Widow's Might"

The
Benediction
of Beauty
Part II

FOR the present the concern of every smart person at Palm Beach centered in plans for the bal masqué at the Everglades. The coconut ball was over; the big parties at Whitehall were events of the past, but this final grand affair of the season was still in delightful prospect. Trying to keep their costumes secret from each other, Caro had chosen to be a Watteau shepherdess; Sallie was to be a Chinese singsong girl; and Claude had a brilliant harlequin costume of red and green and black diamond patches. But John, because of a plan which had come to his mind, was to wear the garb of a diplomatic corps member—black-satin small clothes and tail coat, with a ribbon starred with orders across the stiff shirt bosom.

The night of the ball, John surveyed the crowded dancing floor with keen interest. Quite an occasion, and he was obliged to admit that they did these things well in America. Amid the assemblage of masks there were even tragic or pathetic figures; yet on the whole how joyous they all were! One could murmur in the ear of grande dame or bourgeoisie an impudent or loving message; one's manner could be inno-

cent or beguiling. One could be as bold at ten people, though others would pass through the company afraid to speak. A hand—an unknown hand—touching one's shoulder would cause the heart to stop breathless, asking who was this mysterious person. The mere donning of a mask seemed to harden one's sensibilities; a changed voice, and one talked at ease with any stranger. And as for John Renzey, he would have Sallie to himself in the very heart of the throng.

As he went into the room he looked at those near him, all with the same air of searching for some one. A woman caught familiarly at his hand, Caro, who had been watching for him, now kept him in view, her heart beating until she thought the sound of its pulsing would betray her. A group separated them, then suddenly she seized his arm. John regarded her seriously, pretending not to have recognized her.

"Will you marry me?" asked Caro in excellent French, her voice disguised as well as possible.

"That's the twentieth time I've been asked that question," he replied.

"And what did you say?" inquired the cool voice of the shepherdess in

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pale blue, yellow curls all hidden beneath a white wig.

"If one were disposed to accept me, I'd—"

With an instinctive movement Caro tried to disengage the hand which he was holding. But the diplomat put his arm around her waist and drew her close to him. What happiness, deliciously perverse joy, she experienced!

"Why do you try to get away from me?" he whispered. "If I married some one else, would it make you unhappy?"

"Make me unhappy? Don't you know how indifferent I am to love?"

"Indifferent?" he repeated. "Indifferent? Yes; perhaps! But I thought love always attracted love."

"Not always," said Caro sadly.

"Always," he declared in firm tones. "Sooner or later. I've resolved to conquer; and I shall make you forget your Henry."

Caro's laughing reply was forced.

"Oh! Oh! You've taken me for one of your friends—for a sweetheart! Ah, but you are a silly fellow!"

John, feigning surprise, said:

"Well, who are you?"

"Find out!" called Caro merrily, as she escaped from him.

A mocking smile played around his lips.

"Well, I've advertised that. Now she'll understand, and perhaps let us alone," he mused, his sharp eyes roving over the crowd in search of Sallie.

The little singsong girl had seen Caro talking to the tall man, whose breast bore a gleaming star of gold and diamonds. Several times she started toward them, but timidity oppressed her. Then suddenly the diplomat stood in front of her, bowing low.

"Will you take my arm?" Without reply she put her hand on his sleeve. "You can speak," he suggested. "You haven't lost your voice."

"No, no!" she said. "I—I feel very kindly toward you." Sallie was trying to disguise her voice.

"Ah!" he replied. "I am devoted to you."

"Oh, are you?" she laughed. "Don

Juan, perhaps! He's not capable of a sincere sentiment."

"That is false," he defended himself.

"Come, I'll prove it to you. Here's a quiet corner." Sallie tried to slip away, but his hands clasped hers. "I can't let you go before you hear my plea." With an authority she could not resist he seated her in a chair.

"Now! I believe you said I was not capable of a sincere sentiment?" He had abandoned his gay speech and manner. Sallie gave an affirmative sign. "Well, it's not true. I'm in love with a young girl."

"You!" Sallie's voice quivered in an effort to be mockingly gay.

"It is the truth!"

"A young, blond miss, I suppose?"

"No, a dark young miss."

"Is she pretty?"

"To me, yes!"

"Ah! Then she's ugly to others?"

"I did not say so. She has the loveliest eyes in the world. She is exquisite, intelligent, original. I love as I never thought I could love. It is true that for the first time I wish to marry. Shall I tell you her name?" His voice was low and appealing.

"No, no!" she demurred. "I am not curious."

"But you know her name because you know it is yours."

At this Sallie rose quickly, her deep feeling apparent in spite of her mask.

"What folly!" she exclaimed briskly.

John stepped closer, taking her hands in his.

"A folly? Why? I cannot make you a declaration now, but my word is given. Tell me you believe I love you."

"But I am not free. You know that."

"But you do not wear a ring. And if you have one, I shall never be happy until I know you've returned it."

"Do you mean break my engagement? Oh, that's impossible! Impossible! Henry does not deserve that. It would spoil his life. He loves me truly."

John's voice was brittle and bitter.

"Look into your heart, see what is there, and tell me if I am wrong! Tell me if you are going to marry this

Henry who spares you from his sight for so long, at such a time!"

Violently Sallie pulled her hands away, just at the moment when they were interrupted by the arrival of two dominos; and while they were talking to John, she disappeared, intent only upon speeding to the haven of her room.

Once inside, with the door shut against perplexing problems, the first thing that met her eye was a yellow envelope. Her face went white, her hands trembled as she tore it open to read:

Will arrive Wednesday. Much love,
HENRY.

And John had just said she could not marry Henry, that he didn't think Henry loved her. The telegram fluttered from her relaxing fingers. She should deny that, feel indignant at such a charge, but she only smiled pitifully. No; she could not lie to herself; she did love John. She flung herself on the bed and lost all track of time. Why hadn't Henry guarded her, been with her? It was all his fault, anyway, his fault! She had found a grievance against poor Henry. He might be loyal, devoted. But he had never created in her heart this disturbing thing that made her heart beat just at the thought of John. She recalled the time she had spent with John, and how short the moments had seemed. How quickly and happily life would glide along! The years had seemed so long to look forward to with Henry!

No! She could never make him happy. She understood that now. It was her duty to set him free—yes, her duty. She held to that thought, denying to herself that she was not fair to Henry. Perhaps the world might blame her, but no one could understand her feeling; she couldn't make him unhappy. After all, what would he be losing?

Impulsively she got up from the bed to look at her engagement ring in its leather box. What would Henry say when she gave it back? As her eyes rested on the sparkling stone it brought back happy memories so strongly that remorse chilled her soul.

"Oh, poor Henry!" Her eyes filled with tears. "What shall I do?" How could she tell him? Hour after hour she asked the same questions.

But while poor, distressed little Sallie was suffering in her room; while Henry's train was speeding to her at last; while Caro, down in the ballroom, was conscious that John still searched for the missing Sallie, an elderly gentleman of military bearing had left the evening train at the Poinciana station. Within two hours he presented himself in evening dress at the Everglades Club, demanding to be directed to the suite of Prince Renzey of Roumania. The card which he proffered bore the name of Baron Czerny.

When the club manager was finally summoned to convince this gentleman that, as the polite clerk and an attendant bellboy insisted, there was no such person as a Prince of Roumania living in the club, to their astonishment the manager bowed deferentially.

"I believe his highness is dancing at the moment. But I shall go for him, myself. You understand, baron, that his highness impressed upon me the fact that he wished to remain in strict incognito during his visit with us."

Followed then a fairly stormy interview between John Renzey and the fatherly old baron. And because a reporter from the *Palm Beach News* came through the corridor on her way from the ballroom just as the two entered the elevator, there also followed a scoop of tremendous importance to society in the next morning's paper.

Unaware of all this, the next morning Sallie had risen to the heights of self-sacrifice. Even her love for John was overshadowed. She had such a high regard for Henry, she was so grateful for his affection. It was insupportable to think of disappointing him; and, if he could only understand that she respected rather than loved him, perhaps it would make everything easier for both of them.

When at last he was in Palm Beach, and on this somber, rainy Wednesday morning his card had been sent up to

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Sallie, the trembling of his hands as he adjusted his necktie betrayed his agitation.

"Hello, Henry!" Sallie spoke quickly as she entered her sitting room, where she had asked to have him taken. Her tone was matter-of-fact as it might have been if they had parted only the night before.

Their eyes met, their glances hardened. They might have been strangers for all the messages exchanged. An embarrassed silence.

"Your partner returned earlier than you expected?" remarked Sallie, with all the pleasantness she could command.

"No, I didn't wait for him. I left affairs in charge of my secretary."

"Oh! That means that you were in a hurry. Was it to see me?" The bright impudence he had so loved grated harshly now.

"Does that astonish you?" he asked. Neither of them was aware that he had not replied to her greeting. "The loneliness I felt at our separation does not seem important?" He spoke in an unnatural voice, hesitatingly. "I received a letter saying—saying that an affair—a marriage, perhaps—was being noised about between you and a man you'd only just met. So I came at once to take you away." The tone of authority! Was it that of a husband, wondered Sallie.

"And who was the person who did you such a marvelous service?"

"That doesn't matter, dear! In Heaven's name, stop being so flippant. I can't endure any more." He reached for her hand. "Tell me quickly now that you are mine—always mine!"

But Sallie stood as though she were paralyzed. Only her lips moved, yet without sound. At last her voice, low and husky, cried:

"Oh! I wish I could say always, Henry! I wish I could, but I cannot!" She was astonished at her own words.

He recoiled from her, dropping her hand.

"Then this marriage that's been talked about is true," he cried roughly.

"No, no! It's not a question of marriage. He—he has only asked—only

asked— Can't you see that I can't be your wife?"

"Because you love another?"

Sallie's pale face flushed a painful red.

"I find that I could never be satisfied with you. You'd not want me if I were discontented?"

"Ah, yes! I understand! The life abroad appeals to you with its brilliancy, its freedom, and—am I right?—a title?" He was infinitely sarcastic in his deference. "If it were only that, I could buy you one. Perhaps I could even get to be the Baron de Touggourt! What would you say to that?"

"What on earth are you talking about? If you were a prince, I'd not marry you." Sallie was honestly bewildered by his strange words.

But Henry's smile could not conceal the hurt in his gray eyes.

"Oh, then it's my person and not my estate you've been comparing with that of your Prince of Roumania?"

"My *what*? What did you say?" Sallie's eyes filled with tears. "How could I ask for my freedom if it would make you unhappy?" Her sincerity pierced his heart.

"Oh, sweetheart, sweetheart! Tell me this is all a nightmare, just another one of your little jokes. Come and say as you always do: 'Sallie will be good, now, Henry!'"

But Sallie could only shake her head sadly.

"Marriages are written, and ours is not." She drew off the ring slowly, her face tense with emotion. She had worn that badge for two years.

As Henry took it, in an impulse of anger he turned and threw it hastily into the grate, where a fire burned to dispel the dampness. Instinctively Sallie rushed forward to save it from the flames, but Henry caught her arm.

"Let it alone," he said harshly. "You have not the right to touch it. I wish it destroyed." In a tone filled with irony, he remarked: "That's the woman! She'd risk danger to save a jewel, but she'd quietly break a man's heart. God may pardon you; I never will."

When he had rushed from the room, Sallie clasped her hands as if in an effort to keep her quivering body from falling. Her lips murmured: "Oh, it's dreadful, dreadful!" Unheeded tears rolled down her white cheeks.

At this moment Caro entered the room from her own suite.

"The maid has just brought me Henry's card! Ah!" she exclaimed, taking in the scene. "You've quarreled with him already?"

Restraining her sobs with great difficulty, Sallie murmured:

"We've done better than that. Our engagement is ended."

"You've finally broken your word. How awful of you!" An emotion she did not recognize as jealousy made her voice harsh and stern.

But at that Sallie's eyes flashed.

"Awful?" she repeated. "Awful? My conscience wouldn't let me marry a man I don't love." Sallie looked angrily at Caro. "By the way, was it you who wrote to Henry? Who gave you the right to meddle in my affairs?"

"It was my right," responded Caro. "I shall only be remorseful the rest of my life because I didn't write him in time. I would never have imagined that your desire to bear a title would cause you to do such a cruel thing." Caro's eyes were repelling as they measured the girlish figure.

"A title? What do you mean by that?" A frown furrowed above Sallie's eyes.

Caro laughed scornfully.

"Don't tell me that you haven't read all about John Renzey in the morning paper! But I should say Prince John! She curtsied mockingly to Sallie.

"Oh, Caro, don't! Don't tease me!" Sallie passed reflectively, then said with conviction:

"I remember now that Henry said something about a prince and a title. But won't you tell me, please? You should know that I've been too wretched, worrying over Henry's coming, to have stopped to read a newspaper."

But Caro was not to be touched by pity. Her head lifted haughtily.

"Well, then, listen to this! And I wish you joy of it!" Unfolding the paper in her hand, Caro began to read:

"Society has just learned with interest that Prince John Renzey of Roumania has been a guest at the Everglades Club for the past few weeks. During that time his highness has preserved his incognito under the name of John Renzey. With the arrival last night of Baron Ferdinand Czerny, however, it has become known that the sojourn of Prince John unofficially precedes the proposed visit of his sovereign, Queen Marie, who is expected in the United States before the close of the season on a philanthropic mission."

"Good Heavens!" gasped Sallie. "Honestly, Caro? I never knew a thing about it!" Sallie sank down on the bed, the fingers of one hand pressed against her lips.

"Well, I suppose nothing can keep you from marrying the prince," commented Caro. "He'll surely ask you. You are very rich, you know."

"He has already asked me," replied Sallie, with unexpected dignity. "And I'll give him all I have, because I love him. John has no need of a title to please. You know that well enough yourself. If you were in my place you—"

"Stop!" cried Caro, her lips pressed in a straight line, her heart on fire. She thought, "I can't bear it!" Sallie should not have her lover. "You're a little fool!" she flung at the dazed Sallie, as she went out of the room.

Sallie could not ignore the repeated telephone messages from John, who finally won permission to call upon her in her sitting room.

Pretending not to see the mute reproach in her eyes when they were face to face, John said gently:

"Did you not think I was sincere last night? I should not have spoken so amid those surroundings at the bal masqué, but I want to repeat now what I said then. I love you!"

Sallie was perverse, refusing to let her mood fit his.

"And to how many women have you said those words?"

"Many, as you do not doubt!" he acknowledged frankly. "But to none have I offered my name. To you who

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have inspired the deep affection of my life—to you I offer all I have, all that I am. And you love me,” he added in a firm tone. “I know. But so much has happened since you ran away from me last night. I am told your Mr. Colt has arrived, and there has been that foolish story in the newspaper. And I have also been disciplined by Baron Czerny for remaining incognito and neglecting the interests of my queen for love of you! Oh, my dear little Sallie! Can you still tell me you are to marry this Henry Colt?”

“No, I have just broken my engagement to Henry—three hours ago. And, oh, John! It was before I had even heard of what was in the paper,” she added, an unsteady little catch in her voice.

His sensitive face seemed illumined with happiness.

“Is it true?” he cried. “You are free? Oh, Sallie! You fill me with unspeakable joy. And now you will consent to be my wife?”

“Are you not afraid to marry a girl—very independent? Full of faults, as all Americans are? Well——” She temporized nervously.

“Well?” he echoed joyously. “You consent?”

She raised her eyes, made a moue, and shrugging her shoulders, said:

“I don’t suppose it would do any good to refuse you.”

As he took her hand and pressed it to his lips, his eyes lit with love’s devotion, Sallie’s pretty air of confusion, the color running riot in her cheeks, would have told any one how happy she was.

So far as the rest of the world was concerned, Henry Colt’s abrupt departure from Palm Beach that very day gave rise to the rumor that the engagement between him and Sallie had been broken.

She, however, would not discuss the subject with any of her friends, until one evening at dinner with Caro, Claude, and two or three others. Sallie’s preoccupation was too noticeable to escape comment. She was feeling

just a bit afraid of these people who knew her so well, and amid the laughter her attitude was marked. In her fingers a small piece of bread was being crumbed, when she leaned over impulsively to whisper in the ear of John Renzey, who sat beside her. He smiled fondly at her as she looked from him now to regard each friend in turn.

Lifting her glass of champagne, she commanded suddenly.

“Drink to the happiness of Sallie!”

“Is this your birthday?” inquired Claude indolently.

“No, sir! It’s my engagement to John Renzey that I——”

Caro, who had raised her glass with the rest, heard no more as she put the goblet hurriedly down on the table. Cries of: “Your engagement to John—to Prince John?” and other exclamations of amazement fortunately prevented attention from being drawn to Caro. Only Sallie heard the words she spoke.

“It’s not possible.”

“Oh, it is possible!” replied Sallie, her eyes on Caro. “I am serious. And if there is any one here who objects, I do not care.” Her manner was faintly defiant.

“Oh, but poor Henry!” some one murmured flippantly. “What about him?”

“I’m thoroughly sick of hearing that expression, ‘poor Henry!’” blazed Sallie, her eyes filling with tears. “I’m sorry I can’t love every one. But that’s one thing I hope you’ll let me forget.”

Regardless of the fact that John was present, Caro muttered: “To be princess a woman will do many things.” Her voice was hard to recognize, so strained and cold it was.

Hours later, when at last Caro reached her room, she turned on the light at her dressing table. Like one half awake, half stumbling in a dream as she sat down, her hands brushed the hair from her forehead. She reached for a bottle of smelling salts, then nervously she picked up a polisher and brushed it once or twice across her nails. Little by little all motion ceased;

immobile she stared into the mirror, unseeing. Sallie and John! Those two names formed and formed again in her mind. They were to marry. She could not believe it. She would not. She recalled John's ardent looks, his words. How could he ask Sallie when he had told her, Caro, in this very room that he loved her! She recalled the coldness and correctness of his apology for his visit to her room. Yes, she had noticed that many times John's eyes had wandered to Sallie with that warm, enveloping look she had thought was reserved for her alone. That vision brought a sharper sorrow. She got up and walked quickly about the room. She passed in front of the mirror over the fireplace, then, looking down at the dark grate, realized that she was cold. She lighted the fire all ready arranged. How cold she was! Shivering—yes! She had sat still too long in the night air.

The heat gave her body a physical glow of warmth after a time, and she could breathe easier. Then her thoughts turned to Henry as she had seen him in the train before he left, his hands in the pockets of his coat, his hat pulled down over his eyes to hide the suffering of his soul, in torment because of the infidelity and disloyalty of Sallie. Caro was seized with compassion. Poor boy! What would William say to this marriage? In all these days her thoughts had not turned to him. It was all William's fault, anyway. Why hadn't he been here with her? Why had Henry cared more for business than for love?

Sallie's voice over the wire next morning apprised her that John wanted to see her that afternoon.

"And I hope," said Sallie, "that you'll be at home, and that you'll not be too hard on him, no matter what you think of me. If you were, you know it would seem that he could misconstrue your feelings. Men are so funny! And, of course, you did flirt a little, you two." She gave a hard, metallic laugh. "But that's past, and please don't think my head is turned. I know William would understand if he were here."

There was no sound over the wire. Caro had hung up the receiver without replying. She had done it so quietly that Sallie did not hear the click of the instrument.

When Caro faced John that afternoon her manner was perfect. She spoke very naturally, saying:

"All my best wishes!" She held out her hand. Her poise deceived John for a moment. Had not Sallie said Caro was furious?

"I accept your wishes with all my heart," he said, bending low over her hand, though he did not touch it with his lips. "I esteem it an honor to have won Sallie's heart."

"You must understand that I disapprove thoroughly of Sallie's broken engagement. I've known Henry Colt all my life, and frankly my sympathies are with him in this affair. His heart has been so loyal all these years." She hoped John would divine her feeling that he had not been loyal to her. "You'd never have won Sallie's heart. She gave it to you first."

"However that may be, I am grateful. And I am sure I shall always be happy with her. She is so gay, so resourceful. We find so much in common—love for out-of-door life, so that I am sure she will enjoy living in my country. For example: hunting with my horses and dogs, all the simple pleasures she will share with me when we need not be at the court."

But this verbal picture of idyllic life was sheerest torture to Caro's longing heart. She could not trust herself to say a word.

"Oh, do try to be indulgent!" John was pleading earnestly now. "Sally counts on you so much with her uncle."

"She need not," commented Caro. "I am still loyal to Henry."

After John had left, Caro stood nervously twisting a handkerchief in her delicate fingers. So this was the first station of her unhappy love. Before the world she would have to congratulate, to give another what should have been hers. She would be obliged to make peace with Sallie. Oh, why should she suffer so?

From that time forward, when the plans of the marriage were discussed in her presence she wanted to cover her ears, to shut out any sound of it. Her unhappy envy over the beautiful engagement ring tore at her heart, while she must appear sedate, coldly correct when she was on fire within her soul. When John treated her in the familiar manner of a member of the family, and referred to her as "my aunt," she could have screamed. Sallie would always amuse him, he had said; but some time she would make him see that in her heart were depths of affection which might have been for him. And if he asked occasionally, "Why are you so silent?" her heart bounded with joy. Ah, he had not altogether lost interest in her.

It was inevitable that she should remember the first time she had gone to church with John, and how he had said that one should take the church definitely into one's life, that it held one so firmly. Yet she felt perverse, wicked; she was seized with terror. Was she menaced by a severe illness? For the first time in her life she felt alone, aware that her soul needed a refuge. Could she ever be resigned to Sallie's marriage? One moment she determined to go away from all of this, and in the next she realized that she only seemed to live when she was in the presence of John.

So she made a daily habit of visiting the church; she who had never cared for the religious service was now undeniably soothed.

As she was setting out from the club one morning on her way to the church shortly before ten o'clock, Caro came face to face with William just entering the building.

"Where did you come from?" she cried, standing rigidly erect.

With his eyes of affection William tried to analyze the transformation found in his wife's beautiful face. After a moment he asked:

"What has changed you so? Have you been ill?"

Caro's cheeks flushed as she replied:

"No! I've not been ill. Why should you think that? Am I so old or haggard looking?"

"Of course not, my dear! But you look different, somehow."

"Well, that doesn't prove anything, unless that you've not seen me in so many weeks." Caro spoke coldly now. "I was not to know of your plan to come, of course. You didn't write to me."

Eager to assure her, he tried to talk as if his coming had been perfectly natural.

"Oh, then you've talked to Henry and Paul? They induced you to come?"

"Caro, my dear!" he repeated patiently. "I came because I found life insupportable without you, and you seemed in no mood to come to me. We must both forgive each other."

A boy appeared with his bags, interrupting their conversation. But when they were alone in Caro's rooms, William put his arms about her. She heard the beating of his heart, so firm and strong; the thought of their love put out of her mind for the moment the image of this other man. But the certainty of her suffering clouded her face until she looked with tear-dimmed eyes at her husband and said:

"Why didn't you come sooner?"

"Well, it's all right now. I'm here." William patted her shoulder with a fatherly gesture Caro particularly hated, and releasing her gently he turned to unstrap his hand luggage.

Then Caro was seized with humiliation; a stupor of horror held her. How could she be so deceptive?

"I suppose, before anything else, you'll want to see Sallie about this supposed engagement of hers?" Caro sat watching William's orderly selection of a few articles from his bag.

"I most certainly do," he declared, so emphatically that Caro smiled in spite of her troubled feelings. "One of the things I hope to do while I'm down here is to break up that match. You know, my dear, that a man who steals a march on another, knowing the girl's engagement, is a coward."

His remark instinctively produced in Caro an anger, as well as the desire to hurt her husband.

"Listen to a wise man!" She laughed disdainfully. "For you the mysteries of life and love are closed books. You'll never understand them, immersed as you are in yourself and business. In my judgment you can't stop this marriage. You're too late."

William was startled by her words, and turning back to put his hands on her shoulders, said:

"Do you really think so, my dear?" His smile was so sad, so humble. "I've only been thinking of Sallie's future. Her happiness should be our first consideration, you know."

Caro remembered this conversation many times within the next few days when, after repeated conferences with Sallie and John, William was completely subjugated, admitting that he felt John to be a type of man better suited to her than Henry would be. The two men had regarded each other at their first meeting with mingled curiosity and suspicion. For his part, when he first saw William, John recalled the inference he had gathered from Caro's words in speaking of her husband—that he was a splendid creature, yes! But made for other things than love.

Since William's arrival at Palm Beach the change in Caro's manner had become even more apparent. She was more calm, sweeter; but there were moments when one read in her beautiful eyes the reflex agony and pain, as when her glance involuntarily sought John's. She tried to be brave, but she could not hide from William the passion in her voice when they were alone together and she spoke of Sallie's deception. She did not hate Sallie, though she could not help regarding her as the instrument that had wounded her. But William misunderstood her emotion, as Caro hoped he would, while she prayed that her love for John might become a feeling of sacrifice, in which there could be no passions, no jealousies. Yet always in his presence she was nervous; his eyes had only to meet hers to cause her heart to beat rapidly.

How Caro got through the days before the wedding she never knew. Happily there had been no complications arising through John's official position. Baron Czerny and others had discreetly investigated Sallie's social status and the extent of her fortune, finding both eminently satisfactory. The baron made it clear that John might make his plans without fear of conflict with the royal program.

So the departure from Palm Beach, the arrival in New York, and the immediate preparations seemed a dream to Caro. There were visits to dressmakers, to the jewelers—all the attendant details which go to make up a fashionable wedding. And through it all, Caro felt the responsibility of Henry Colt's unhappiness. He still clung to her friendship, as though she could help him through these days when the loss of Sallie seemed more than he could bear.

Days passed and there was Sallie dressed for the last time in her bridal white. Caro endured the nuptial High Mass in an agony of soul, her thoughts speeding back to the little house of worship in Florida where she had gone with John. And now it was Sallie going to church with him, going to church in such a different way; coming down the aisle on his arm, his wife and a princess. It was like a fairy story.

At the wedding breakfast and the reception Caro moved through it all, playing brilliantly the rôle of aunt to the bride. She talked gayly with one and all, a figure of delicate loveliness in orchid chiffon and lace. But Caro had not been able to induce Henry to attend the wedding, though she had wanted the comfort of his presence. Amid all the joy the two would be the only unhappy ones.

Sometimes, after this, Caro surprised William by asking if he'd not go to church with her, saying that she found great peace in prayer. He was glad to see the brown eyes so meltingly tender. Curiously enough at the moment he had John Renzey's thought of Caro's fitness

to be enshrined in all the impersonal, ethereal beauty of a saint.

"Well, this trip certainly did queer things to the Hamilton family connection. An international marriage for one member and for another a changed religious sense. Seriously, I think it's all rather too emotional."

Six months ago Caro would have pounced upon such a statement. Now she could let it pass unheeded, caring little for William's puritanical temperament. Emotional was the last thing this experience should be called, she thought, out of her knowledge of the powerful emotions she was seeking to drive from her soul by this very dependence on things of the spirit. But if William did not understand Caro's motive for seeking comfort from religion, neither was she honest enough to admit that she had worked herself into a species of hypnotism through her frantic desire to immolate her love on the altars of sacrifice.

For some time she succeeded very well, until Sallie's letters began to arrive from abroad with the name of John Renzey on almost every page. Descriptions of their travel inland to reach John's estate, their meetings with personages of John's native country, plans for their presentation at court, were worldly subjects enough to fill a woman's heart with something quite akin to envy. So far as Sallie's material goods were concerned, Caro could have given them their proper valuation had they not been so bound up with the life and the love of John Renzey. Now they represented everything of which Caro had been cheated. In utter horror she realized that the seduction of John's presence was growing stronger, that it had not been banished either by her stern declaration of faithfulness to William nor by her prayer. In no sense, she forced herself to acknowledge, had she recovered her liberty. Over and over the cry rose from her heart, "What is the use? What is the use?"

Again and again she turned to prayer for solace. Day after day she increased the hours spent at formal devotions. Society meant nothing to her; nor the

companionship of any of her old friends; the only persons she cared to see were Henry and her brother. When she was away from church she seemed removed to another plane where there was no contact with the life she had always known. But once more she was not honest with herself, or she did not know that she was using her religion as a device to draw closer to John.

It worried William to have Caro so distraught, until he grew to fear this religion that so surely held her soul away from him. Caro, who had loved the luxury of breakfasting in bed, now began her day with prayer. Night after night when William came home for dinner he found her wearied and pale. She was dressed always in the plainest clothes, and wore no jewelry save her wedding ring.

"Well, how did you amuse yourself to-day, dearest?" William might ask each evening. But as her reply had always been the same in the past when a tiresome luncheon or tea had filled her hours, so now the answer in her quiet voice was invariable.

"I have been at church."

During the summer she had refused to leave the city, though she encouraged William to join some friends at the shore. He had not dared leave her, and in consequence the early fall found them as established in the old house on the Avenue as if there had never been a change of season.

One prematurely cool evening Caro returned home just before dinner to find her mail piled up in confusion on her desk. Beneath the invitations which were still sent to William Hamilton's wife, she saw the foreign stamps on a large package. It seemed almost incredibly wonderful that her heart could beat so steadily. She started to tear off the outer wrapping. Perfectly composed, she drew out two pictures. Here was Sallie's familiar face, happy and content, and—— The photographs slipped from her hands to the floor. Frantically her lips were repeating the prayers which were her defense.

But when she had regained her composure, she gathered the pictures again

in her hands. Now it was the likeness of John to which she turned, quite unprepared for the surge of old emotion that swept away the bulwarks of her new faith. She gazed into the marvelous eyes, shadowy as the secret places of the heart; what a beautiful head he had! In the remembrance of the caressing accents of his voice, the words of love he had spoken returned to her. Fiercely she flung the photograph away, to sink down on the chaise longue before the crisp little fire which had been laid for her comfort.

Eyes closed to shut out everything about her, Caro gave way completely to the bitter longing, the regret which possessed her. Her soul was like a weary traveler walking footsore and alone at nightfall, overtaken by the terror of a storm beyond his power to control. Every shelter built so carefully by her devotion, every refuge, had gone down before this torrent of feeling with the futility of flimsy wooden houses in a flood.

What use had there been for her to remain faithful to William? Could the way of the transgressor have been any more difficult than this way she had chosen so prayerfully? Caro would have given all these months of her life to have been back in that moonlit room at Palm Beach where such heedless, impetuous love had been repulsed at her threshold.

"Oh, John," she sobbed bitterly, "I'm only human; just a woman in spite of all my supplications. If you'd only been stronger than I!"

After a time she could not deny the incessant plea of her heart. Holding the picture once more before her, Caro's eyes dwelt now on the curve of his lips. She read into his smile only a sweet boyishness. Her white face was drawn with anguish. Choking its way up out of her heart a pitiful cry broke from her lips as she threw the photograph suddenly into the little fireplace. The flames seized it with regret, it seemed. For seconds John's countenance stared up from the red coals. Even when it was burning, with crumpling edges, the eyes still regarded her

tenderly. Caro followed the curling flame with answering eyes that grew larger and more brilliant.

"Why must I always destroy my love? Why? Why must I do it?" Again she fell back upon the long chair, weeping now like a heartbroken child.

It was here that William found her, golden hair disheveled and brown eyes rimmed with red. On the floor beside her was the picture of Sallie.

"Well, well, Caro, darling! What has happened to my dear girl?" He thought he had taken in the situation at a glance, though he did not notice the filmy coil of ash fallen into a corner of the grate.

"I—it's nothing," declared Caro, turning her face toward him on the pillow. "I suppose I'm tired."

William sat down on the edge of the chaise longue, stroking her shoulder.

"I know you are, dear," he murmured. "Cooped up here in the city all summer, alone so much of the time." He reached down for Sallie's photograph.

"Isn't that a splendid likeness of Sallie?" he asked heartily. But Caro's eyes only filled with tears. "You've missed little Sallie, haven't you?"

Busy with a resolution dawning in her mind, Caro was silent. She knew in a flash of truth that now her wish was for only one thing in the world. She would go to John; and if his vital presence had even half the compelling power of his pictured face, then she would fling herself upon his mercy, begging for his love.

"I'll tell you what," William was saying in his most matter-of-fact, roast-beef - and - Yorkshire - pudding voice. "Why don't you just run over to visit Sallie and John? They've told you that they'd love to have you any time. Wouldn't it be kind of fun for you to follow up this Graustarkian romance you were responsible for?" Wrapped in his pleasant fancy, William enlarged upon his idea.

"Don't speak of Sallie! I won't have it!" Convulsively Caro gripped the hand which held her own.

He looked down, alarmed at her vehemence.

"My dear Carol!" he said anxiously. "You're not yourself. What is the matter, dear? Won't you tell me?"

"I know I've not been myself, William," she admitted. "But that's all over now. And I will go abroad as you suggest. I'd like to do that, just as soon as ever I can."

Convinced of Caro's real need for this diversion, William hastened to arrange for her departure within that very week. He would be lonely without her in the quiet house, even though she had only moved wraithlike through the rooms in these past months. So he hoped that his gay, spoiled, whimsical, petulant little love of other days might come back to him when Caro returned.

Burning with impatience to get away, Caro threw herself feverishly into the business of shopping and packing. Sallie's cable had been received, telling her to meet them in Paris. There remained but one duty.

Caro had sent for Henry Colt the day before she was to leave.

"A last cup of tea with me, Henry dear," she told him. "A sort of stirrup cup, as it were. For I feel, somehow, as though I were riding away into a great adventure."

But Henry merely seemed glad in a half-hearted way that Caro was going to see Sallie.

"She'll never know what you've been to me, Caro. Thanks to you, I think I can face facts now like a man. So give her my good wishes, will you, please?"

"Indeed, I will," she responded. "But there's something I want you to do for me. In a way, it will be doing something for Sallie, too. I want you to promise that you'll always look after William. He may be lonely when I'm no longer here. Promise you will always look after him!"

"Always look after him?" echoed Henry, putting down his tea cup. "Why do you say it that way? You're not thinking of dying, or anything like that, I hope!"

"How absurd, Henry! Why, I'm just going to begin to live!" Wistfully she looked at him. "I've returned to the worldly Caro. Didn't you realize that?"

"But your lovely, fluffy hair is very like a halo to-day. Did you realize that?" Henry smiled at her, touched in spite of himself by her appearance. For all her new resolution, Caro had not yet lost her heavenly air of detached contemplation.

"Pretty speeches—pretty speeches, Henry!" chided Caro, laughing in spite of herself. "You're coming on in the world, too."

At ten o'clock the next morning Henry was back at the Hamilton house with his car, having asked on the afternoon before for the privilege of driving Caro and William to the pier. Paul Everly was to meet them at the boat.

"You'll not mind sitting with the luggage in the back, William? I think Caro'll be more comfortable in the front seat with me." Henry seemed already to have assumed the responsibility of William. They were to have luncheon together after Caro's boat had sailed.

Up Fifth Avenue she was riding for the last time, thought Caro, grateful to have the two men respect her wish to be silent. At last she was on her way to John. How long would it be before she saw these familiar shops and houses again? Her unavailing struggles would soon be at an end. Scarcely noting how far they had gone, she felt the swing of the car as Henry turned westward off the Avenue. Now they were caught in the varied traffic of midmorning, trailing a laden truck hauled by two plodding horses. The air was clear and bright with powdered gold of the sun. There was a strange peace in the latent energy of the slow-moving vehicles. From far off there were sounds of whistles and bells mingled in this industrial symphony.

Suddenly a more sinister clamor grew in the distance back of them. Fire engines coming along, just as Henry's

car was within ten yards of a cross street. Instinctively he drew in toward the curb, and as instinctively Caro glanced over her shoulder to watch the monster engine come by, glistening red and gold. The steamer shrieked past them and turned south on the cross street. Another siren sounded. The hook-and-ladder was following. On came the rushing machine, the driver's eyes intent on the route he must take.

Just as he swung the front wheels to take the corner as sharply as possible, a little Jewish boy with a thatch of thick, black hair waving above two shining, black eyes, who had stopped to watch the engines, dropped the roller skate that dangled from its strap in his hand. Without a thought the child jumped to get it as it rolled toward the curb and the path of the fire cart.

A twist to the engine's front wheels, and the driver, cursing aloud, swerved his machine out into the street. But the fireman who perched high above the ladders, his hands on the huge steering wheel that controlled the back truck, felt the swing that jerked the rear of the engine to the left. Tensely he tried to bring the wheels back into their course, holding the steering post steady with his right elbow tight in at his side. But by this time the huge wheels and the projecting ladders were too far at the right of the street, and when the driver began to round the corner, a hoarse yell of alarm and a grinding crash rose sickeningly to join the other noises of the morning.

More quickly than it could be told, the wheels had ground into the front fender of Henry Colt's car, obediently at a standstill by the far curb. Breaking and scraping through the glass and framework of the left side, the end of a heavy ladder caught a smashing blow on the young man's jaw, hurling him violently against Caro Hamilton's left shoulder as the automobile was forced up onto the sidewalk. In the long, long moment of horror before consciousness left her, Caro heard Henry's gasping cry of "Sallie!" and dimly saw a sprawling figure in the street against the farther curb. Through her own mind

there flashed a fierce passion of anger against this accident of fate that would keep her from fulfillment of desire; whatever this meant, she would miss the boat to-day.

Hours later she awakened in a white bed in a white room where unfamiliar objects met her wandering eyes. She felt oddly separated from this body of hers that lay stiff and sore between the sheets.

"William?" she called faintly.

A young woman in the white uniform of a nurse appeared beside her bed. She looked down compassionately, murmured: "Just a minute," and went quickly to the door. Then Caro's brother Paul stood looking at her from the entrance, before he came swiftly forward.

"Oh, my dear little sister, I'm so glad you're all right. You're certain you don't feel any pain?" he was asking tenderly.

With a shudder of terror everything came back to her. The rush of the fire engines, the dreadful, ripping crash against their car, the weight of Henry's head on her shoulder, and the sight of that crumpled body thrown to the pavement outside.

"Where is William?" she demanded, sitting up abruptly and making a move to throw off the bedclothes. "And Henry? Oh, Paul, you must tell me! Are they badly hurt? Where are they? What hospital is this? How did you come here?"

Gently Paul pressed her back against the pillows.

"There, there, my darling! Not so fast! You haven't the strength. You've had a nasty shock, you know."

"But, William—I want to go to him. Where is he? You've no right to keep me from him. You've no right not to tell me what's happened." Caro's voice rose in nervous excitement.

For many minutes Caro lay motionless after Paul, summoning all his courage, had told her in broken sentences how William with a shattered spine was lying in the next room to hers, and how the boy Henry had died without

knowing what had struck him; how he, Paul, had waited vainly for them at the pier, to be stunned by the headline of a newspaper's noon edition, which finally helped him to locate them at the Fifth Avenue Hospital. As he waited for her to speak, Paul thought remorsefully that his news had been too much for her to bear.

But in another electric instant, Caro's vitality seemed to have swept back through her veins. Again she sat up, this time definitely tossing aside the covers. Regardless of her brother's presence, she was about to swing her slender, bare legs to the floor. She saw that a long strip of surgical gauze was strapped below one knee; she saw blotches of bluish green bruise that disfigured her flesh. Paying no heed to her scars, nor the protests of the nurse and her brother, Caro insisted upon dressing and going at once to her husband.

Night and day, after that, she sat by William's side in the hospital. It was her hand that soothed him when the dull ache of his heavy, useless limbs became almost unbearable. It was she who pleaded and cajoled, begged and commanded, that the doctors find some means to save him from the life of a helpless paralytic. She encouraged him daily, hourly; she assured him he would not be a cripple. All the maternal love for which there had been no object in her former life was poured out now in his behalf. In William's present state of weakness this devotion sometimes seemed more poignant than he could bear, and late one afternoon he startled Caro by bursting into tears, as she knelt by the bed, her firm hands seeking by massage to stir warmth in his body.

"Why, William! Dearest! Oh, my dearest, you mustn't do that!" she cried at first in alarm, then flinging an arm across his breast and suddenly burying her face against his shoulder. His free hand held her tightly to him, while his pitiful tears rained on her soft hair.

Her own eyes were wet with emotion as she lifted her lips to meet his.

"For my sake, you must get well, my darling. I need you more than I ever needed anything in my whole life. And I love you more, William!"

In her life as austere given to duty as a nursing sister's in a convent, Caro came to realize that a selfish devotion which had only meant hours and hours on her knees in prayer was not true religion. It had not done, nor could it do for her what this love was making possible. Here, in the sick room she was to keep cheerful and bright for William, she was finding in service the instrument of real happiness. Many times in these days William rested his eyes upon her, unconsciously comforted by the benediction of her beauty which had become richer and warmer. The soft shadows sorrow had left beneath her dark eyes made their glance at once pathetic and brave.

At last, after the first, long fortnight of William's imprisonment in the braces and casts, Paul told Caro that the *Olympic*, with Sallie and John Renzey aboard, would dock that morning. John Renzey! Caro heard it now like a stranger's name, with a nauseating wave of shame to recall that passion of anger against fate which had been her first reaction in the awful moment of crisis. Paul had cabled Sallie of her uncle's accident and Henry's death—intelligence which set the Renzeys en route to New York as quickly as possible.

In the room she had taken next to William's at the hospital, Caro waited for the visitors. She thought of them in a curiously impersonal manner, as if they were characters about whom she had been reading in a book. She watched the trembling of her hands in a detached sort of way; it seemed odd to think of the warm, vivid Sallie like this.

Then footsteps in the corridor outside and the door swung softly open. There was Sallie, wrapped in a beige-colored cloak, flying into her arms, unconscious of everything else.

"I'm so glad to see you, Caro!" Sallie's eyes brimmed with tears, in

spite of her determination to be brave. "How is dear Uncle William? Is he strong enough for me to see him?"

"You can go to him now, for a few moments. He's waiting anxiously to see you." Caro spoke to Paul, who was taking off his overcoat. "Will you take Sallie in to William? You've not seen him yourself to-day."

The connecting door between the rooms opened; it closed, and Caro was alone with John Renzey, whose smoky gray eyes looked at her with that old, watchful, appraising glance. He took her hand, carried it to his lips, lifted his eyes once more to hers. There was not a flicker of her eyelids, nor a quickening beat of her pulses. Tranquilly she examined the face before her, with inward astonishment, a little disdain. Where was the magic? Amiability, self-esteem, an easy confidence she read

there—nothing more. His soul seemed old and worn to hers that was young and blithe as though it had just been born. And how she had suffered because of him!

While she was thinking all this John had been regarding her, realizing intuitively the unearthly quality of her new loveliness that was nearer than it had ever been to his old ideal of her—a beautiful, holy image in a shrine. She had found some secret of life that would leave her forever more untouched by conflict.

For herself Caro knew now beyond the shadow of a doubt that she was free—free from a desire that would never have lived except for her old, selfish life. And through the suffering of one she held dear she had been brought at last to the ways of God and peace.

THE END.



THERE are few virtuous women who are not weary of their profession.—*La Rochefoucauld.*



A WOMAN is more considerate in affairs of love than a man; because love is more the study and business of her life.—*Washington Irving.*



"GIVE me, woman, thy little truth!" said I. And thus spake the old woman: "Thou goes to women? Do not forget thy whip!"—*Friedrich Nietzsche.*



WOMEN, according to Mrs. Peachum, are "bitter bad judges," of the characters of men; and men are not much better of theirs, if we can form any guess from their choice in marriage.—*William Haslitt.*



THE lover's pleasure, like that of the hunter, is in the chase, and the brightest beauty loses half its merit, as the flower its perfume, when the willing hand can reach it too easily. There must be doubt; there must be difficulty and danger.—*Walter Scott.*

by
Nina Wilcox Putnam

Author of
"Believe You Me"



and
"It Pays to Smile"

The Radiant Lady

THE young minister had refused her invitation to remain for supper. This was the fourth time he had done so, and it was with slow, disheartened step that Araminta crossed to the little stone seat at the far end of her garden, and sat herself down to think the situation over. Under one slender, earth-stained hand lay the "Tract on Temperance," which he had forgotten in the formal haste of his departure; and Araminta's supple fingers caressed it unconsciously, the rest of her body immovable, her sleek head bent in the sunlight.

Araminta had never had a lover; and until now it mattered little, for she had not thought of one—much. Of course, there used to be Joey, the gardener's boy, who had interested her at the age of seven; and the Groton boy, who used to sit across the aisle in church at holiday time, and then the young man who married her Cousin Kate, after all—but these were mere shadows, half-formulated fancies to be blushed over and consigned to oblivion. No one had really mattered until now. And now it mattered terribly.

A golden-armored bee boomed about

the prim ruffle of her gown in search of the illusive scent of lavender it held; but Araminta did not move, and presently it went away and lit upon one of a row of gaudy nasturtiums which lined the pebbled path. A light breeze sprang up and swayed the hollyhocks, so that they whispered to each other as they brushed the mellow brick of the high garden wall. It was a sound Araminta loved to hear, but this afternoon she did not listen. Instead, she let her head drop farther down upon her breast, till the smooth, tightly coiled crown of it gleamed palely in the full sun, and the self-thrown shadow hid her face. Then her hands fastened tightly upon the tract, and she sat so still that a bluebird came and perched upon the sundial not two feet away, making his shrieking complaint unheeded, and unafraid.

Yes, it mattered vitally this time. How quickly he had gone; it was scarcely courteous! And the visit itself was only a parish one, and perforce. Had he fled for very fear of her? Had she let him see the light in her eyes, and had he been terrified thereby? No, no! Surely not that! Her eyes had been downcast and modest! Oh, the

agony of supposing that he had guessed her hopeless and unwelcomed love! Why should she hope that he would care? He had never looked at her; no one had ever looked at her, not even Joey; and she was almost thirty now—an old maid!

While the minister, at thirty-three, was an eligible young man. What did girls do to attract men? If her mother had lived, she might have told what had attracted her father. Surely no breach of the most sacred covenant, this! Or, if her father had lived, *he* might have told. For asking a girl friend would border on immodest curiosity! After all, perhaps it was as well that there was no one to ask, for probably nice girls did nothing at all, but sat with folded hands and downcast eyes, waiting, waiting, waiting, ah, so long!

Over the heliotrope bed, two butterflies, rapturous, quivering, tremulous with love and the brevity of life, arose in a colorful, whirling, nuptial flight. From the gnarled old apple tree, with its intertwining, caressing limbs, came the song of a robin, who saw that the sun had passed the meridian, and began her call of "*Come home, come home!*"

Perhaps another time the minister would remain to supper. After all, his excuse had been a good one, and the excitement incident to it *might* in some degree account for his unseeing manner toward her. Indeed, it is not every day that one is robbed, and in the very center of the village street, at that! To be spoken to by a great gypsy man, to bespeak him kindly, and then to have the villain make off with one's watch—a valued heirloom, too—is something well calculated to upset the calmest of men. Especially as the hue and cry which followed had been utterly unsuccessful, and the fellow had got away!

All this had happened to the young minister that very day. Indeed, the whole subject of his conversation had been concerning it. He had remained just about long enough to recount the adventure, and then taken his departure on the grounds that the thief might have been caught, and his presence, as complainant, needed. Oh, it was a very

good excuse, and she sympathized deeply with his agitation at the loss of the watch. But there was more, far more, reason for his going. *He had not wanted to stay!* And there was no use in fooling oneself about the fact!

A tiny red squirrel came out upon the upper ledge of the summerhouse. It sat there, motionless, until a second squirrel appeared in hot haste and started a pursuit which buried both creatures in the tangle of rose vine on the roof.

"I'm sure they do something to attract the men!" said Araminta, aloud. "I wonder *what?*"

"They run away!" said a voice from the top of the wall.

"They run—what? My goodness!" cried Araminta, looking up in astonishment.

There, on the top of the west wall, sat a man; a sort of glorified man in strangely colored garments. His tawny head was silhouetted against the sapphire sky, and the sun seemed to strike fire from the lobes of his ears, as though burnished metal was fastened in them. He was hatless and dusty, but the youth and vitality which radiated from him were disarming, especially when concentrated in a smile of exceeding whiteness. Nevertheless, Araminta sprang to her feet and gathered up her skirts in preparation for flight. The man gave a laugh—a strangely pleasant laugh to hear—and Araminta began to move swiftly.

"Oh! Don't do that!" cried the man. "You be attractive enough without!"

Araminta stopped short, her heart beating wildly. What should she do? The man could have no very evil intent, since his voice rang so clear and merry! Perhaps she had better face him. When she did so, the lovely color had mounted in her usually pale cheeks.

"What do you want?" she demanded tremulously.

"Look about you!" he answered, waving his hand airily. "Look at all the loveliness here, and ask again! I wants to come into it—and who would not?"

"My garden?" she exclaimed in-

credulously. "But—but there is a gate on the other side, and I—I do not know you!"

With a graceful leap he was in the inclosure, and, smiling still, came a little way toward her.

"Doesn't you know me?" he asked, laughter lighting his eyes. "Well, I don't know you; but we will both take the risk, eh?"

The very audacity of it left her dumb.

"Beside," continued the man, "if I stay a while, then we will know each other."

"But—but how do you know that I will want you in my garden?" demanded Araminta, advancing a step.

"How do you know that I will want to stay?" he flashed, with another smile. "Ah, but you *do* know, oh, radiant lady!"

Calmly he took two steps backward, paused for a moment as though to listen intently; and failing to hear that for which he listened, sat himself upon the stone bench, his head against the wall, and motioned her to do likewise. Very much against her will, yet irresistibly drawn, Araminta obeyed, taking the far end.

"I suppose I ought to scream for help," she said weakly, "but, somehow, I can't feel that it is necessary."

"Scream for help!" he exclaimed. "Oh! Don't do that. It would kill the little young romance before it is born. Please don't scream for help. I like you better alone!"

There was a moment of silence.

"What is your name?" she asked suddenly.

"Oh, timid fawn!" he replied. "You will know me no better when I say it. But if you wish, my name is Prometheus."

"He was a god," Araminta said.

"Was he?" asked the visitor. "I know the name has to do with the sun; and I am a sun fellow, and no mistake!"

"I love the sun, too," said Araminta. "Do you dance in it?" asked Prometheus.

"Dance—why, no! Why should I?"

"So that it may caress you!" he exclaimed. "See, like this! You turn your back and then your breast, and throw out your arms to him. I dance often in the sun. Come, I will show you."

He took her by the hand.

"But no! But—" protested Araminta, but futilely.

The supple strength of his hand had pulled her sharply to her feet, and unavoidably she tripped toward him a pace or two.

"Too slow, too slow!" he cried. "You must dance faster."

And seizing her about the waist, he whirled her around in a mad measure, which landed them both, breathless, on the little space of lawn about the sundial.

"That's fine!" he panted. "Sit here and take breath. The grass is much better than the hard stone. Did you like it? Will you dance each day, now?"

"How dare you! Oh! My hair!" cried Araminta, with flushed cheeks, trying hard to be very angry—and failing utterly.

What witchery the man had! Lying at her feet, he stared up at her with laughing eyes, and put a detaining hand on hers as she lifted it to her head.

"Don't!" said he. "It looks better windblown. 'Don't tidy your hair so much, don't tidy your life so much. Mess it up by dancing sometimes!'"

"It is wonderful to dance so!" said Araminta reluctantly; but, somehow, forgetting to even try being angry. "It makes you feel—*glorious*! I never really danced before, I think."

She broke off abruptly, for he kept looking up at her and smiling—a strange, meaningful smile, very arresting and magnetic.

"You are very beautiful," he said softly.

Araminta flushed again, a queer sensation tingling through her veins. But she pretended not to hear, and, turning away her head, affected to examine the petunia bed. Something stirred in its scented depths.

"There is that wretched little rabbit

—he eats up *everything!*" she cried, pointing. "If only I could catch him! But I hate a trap or a gun."

"But I will catch him!" said the man, springing up and darting over to the petunias. In another moment he was back, holding the soft, little creature aloft by the ears. He sank back to his place upon the sward, and held it up for her inspection.

"Mercy!" squealed Araminta. "How could you? How wonderful!"

"The Romanies, my people, call them 'ear fellows,'" he told her solemnly. "That is because of the great length of ears. See his heart beat? That is because he fears you. Me he fears not. Will I put him over the wall, or are you goin' to change your mind and let him eat part of your garden?"

"Let him stay!" said Araminta. "There are flowers enough for two."

Prometheus released the little animal, letting it down gently, and together they watched it scamper away into the shrubbery, whence came a sound as of two creatures.

"Hum!" said the man. "Enough flowers for three, or, maybe, more. Doubtless he has a wife."

Araminta said nothing.

"Lean your head back so, against the time stone," suggested Prometheus, noting that she sat uncomfortably. "That is much better, eh? Do you love the wind? If you lie so, it will put its soft fingers about your throat! Ah! But you wear a collar! Is it not hot and uncomfortable?"

"Yes, rather," she answered him.

"Then why do you wear it?" he queried, in evident surprise.

"Why—because people do wear collars, I suppose," she said.

"Take it off!" he begged. "See, I wear no collar, and I, too, am a person. It is silly to wear a thing which is uncomfortable."

"I suppose it is," admitted Araminta, with busy fingers.

The bit of stiffly starched linen was in one hand now, and, with the other, she covered the band at her neck.

"But—but what shall I wear in-

stead?" she pleaded. "I can't go—even you would not want—"

He took the collar from her, and put it on top of the dial. Then he regarded her critically.

"Turn in the other part, so that it is a little lower," he advised, "and I will make you a garland to trim yourself with."

"A garland!" ejaculated Araminta, laughing nervously, but delightedly. "Why, I never wore a garland!"

"But you have made garlands grow," said he. "My people always make garlands. Turn in the neck of your *bodka*."

Under the spell of his marvelous personality, Araminta obeyed; actually obeyed, until the soft, white V at the base of her throat was laid bare. Then she watched, entranced, as he brought poppies with full hands, and, lying upon his back, began twisting their stems together with skilled fingers. And, as he wove, he sang a strange little minor melody, while the world seemed to fade away, leaving them on some Elysian hillside, spirits of youth, glad of life, and thinking only of the sun, and wind, and the rosy garland. Once there came a murmur as of many distant, angry voices, borne in upon the breeze, and, at the sound, they sat alert, tense, a look coming into the man's eyes as of a startled wild thing that hears the hunter. And the woman also listened painfully to she knew not what, infected by his emotion.

Then the sound passed, and, with its going, the smile crept back to the corners of his mouth, and the song continued unbroken, until it and the garland both were finished. Then he flung the silken blossoms about her shoulders, and, taking both her hands in his, drew her toward him.

"Who is your lover?" he asked.

"I have no lover," she answered him.

Why did she tremble so? Prometheus drew her nearer still, and, somehow, her will to resist left her, and she forgot everything except the strength and beauty of him. There was a warm perfume to him, like the heat of a sun-kissed meadow. His hands were brown

and strong, and stained with poppy juice.

"No lover?" he questioned softly.

"Alas!" she said, smiling.

"But you are very beautiful," he said again.

"Beautiful!" This time her heart leaped at the word.

"Oh, no!" she murmured. "I am not—you—that is, if only I were——"

He put both her hands in one of his, and, holding them firmly, reached up with a swift motion and pulled out the two great pins of shell which held her pale hair so snugly. Then a miracle took place. All about her fell the shining masses, wave on wave, till it covered her shoulders and her narrow waist, and even tumbled upon the grass, glinting and glimmering in the dying sun. A new breeze, sprung up as though on purpose to disport itself with her tresses, whipped it into a thousand ringlets, and laid a burnished strand across the man's mouth. How the little tendrils curled among the poppies on her breast; the crimson poppies, whose color was reflected now in her cheeks and lips. Between the parted ivory of her teeth, her breath came sharply.

"Why, oh, why did you so?" she cried. "Why do you mock me, and pull about my hair? I am not beautiful; I have never been beautiful! Why do you mock me? You are cruel, cruel!"

He kissed the strand upon his lips, and laid it gently upon her shoulder. Then he sprang to his feet, still keeping her hands.

"Not beautiful?" he cried derisively. "Oh, radiant lady! Not beautiful? Ha-ha! Come with me!"

Blindly, stumblingly she obeyed, her hands in his, one pace behind him all across the garden, between the nodding clematis, past the clutching rose sprays, to where the lily pool gleamed blue and clear under the evening sky. Tall iris blossomed at its edge, and, pushing these aside, he made her kneel at the margin, and, stooping beside her, bade her look. And with sweet wonder in her eyes, Araminta did as she was bidden.

There, in the still depth of the pond,

was the vast sky, all clear, clear, and pulsing with light. A bird soared high, a mere speck, placed by the Master Hand to measure infinity by; and mirrored against the whole was the golden-haired vision which, up to now, none but the secret mirror and candle of Araminta's chamber had known. Gone was the sleek, prim little head, the pale face, blanched for fear of impropriety; and, in its stead, a maid uncoiffured, free-throated, garlanded—a thing of beauty, flushed with pleasure, and, beside her, a brown-skinned god, whose jeweled ears seemed pointed at the tips.

And as she looked, the god gathered up a great handful of her hair, and drew her nearer, nearer, as they knelt, until his breath was hot upon her cheek, until—— Ah, how the skies trembled in the depth of that pool! Nearer and nearer——

Then came a sudden, sharp rapping at the garden door, and the spell snapped as by a hammer stroke from Jove. Man and maiden once more, they sprang apart, and Prometheus arose in haste.

"The sun has set!" he cried. "I must be gone!"

"No! No!" she wailed.

The knocking came again, louder.

"Yes, I must," he answered breathlessly. "It is no longer safe here. Outside, they cannot catch me, now that I have rested. But here is a token. Keep it, that you may remember me."

Into her unresisting hand he pressed some object, and, with a bound, gained the wall's summit, where he had entered. Then, with a gracefully tossed kiss, he vanished as abruptly and silently as he had come.

Dazed and bewildered, Araminta stood, staring at the spot where he had been a moment since. She was a naiad still, wind-blown and flower-decked, and it seemed incredible that the brown god was no longer with her. Then the knocking at the green wooden gate becoming more persistent than ever, she crossed the garden as though in a dream, and opened it. On the threshold stood the young minister.

"I believe I left my 'Tract on Temperance,'" he began hurriedly.

Then he looked squarely at Araminta and stopped. Next, he closed the gate behind him, and looked again, an unfamiliar, *seeing* expression coming into his eyes.

"I left, I left—that is, I've come back——" he stammered.

"Yes," said Araminta, not realizing, "you left it on the bench. Over there."

The young minister walked stumblingly to where the book lay; walked unsteadily back to where Araminta stood in her golden, flowery glory, and paused before her, the nervous color mounting in his clear, boyish face as he spoke.

"It wasn't only for the tract that I came," he began lamely. "That is to say, it was, but it isn't now—I mean, if I might be allowed to change my mind about supper—you see, they didn't catch the thief, after all, and I could remain. *Please, Miss Araminta.*"

"Yes?" said Araminta, moving off a little.

The young minister followed her closely.

"Oh, don't run away," he exclaimed anxiously. "My dearest Lady—Araminta! May I stay? I have something particular to say to you!"

Then slowly the meaning of his words worked its way into Araminta's dazed understanding; and a wonderful smile lit up her face, making it more beautiful than all the past hours had done.

"Yes, Alexander, you may stay," she said, and held out her hand.

Simultaneously they realized for the first time that she held something in it—the gypsy's parting token.

"*What?*" exclaimed the young minister, pointing to it excitedly.

Araminta gave a little scream, and held the object up to view.

It was the young minister's gold watch.



LOVE's like the measles—all the worse when it comes late in life.—*Douglas Jerrold.*



Too sweet fruits—these the warrior liketh not. Therefore liketh he woman. Bitter is even the sweetest woman.—*Friedrich Nietzsche.*



LOVE may be likened to a disease in this, that when it is denied a vent in one part, it will certainly break out in another.—*Henry Fielding.*



WOMEN seem to doubt their own judgments in love, and to take the opinion which a man entertains of his own prowess and accomplishments for granted.—*William Haslitt.*



THE first symptom of true love in a young man is timidity; in a girl it is boldness. The two sexes have a tendency to approach, and each assumes the qualities of the other.—*Victor Hugo.*

The Foretaste



BUT," said our Confidential Critic, after we had outlined the idea, "aren't you afraid——"

"Of what?" said we blandly.

"Well——" She hesitated and consulted her solitaire diamond. We hadn't observed the diamond until then.

"Tut, tut!" said we. "Engaged to a new man, hey?"

She colored charmingly, but faced us with a candid eye.

"No," she said. "Not exactly a new man."

"Pshaw!" we said. "You don't mean he has white hair?"

"It will take a little explaining, I fancy," she confessed. "You see, I've been engaged to him before. So he isn't a new man quite. It's—hem—the rebirth of an old love."

"Romantic, what?"

"Indeed, yes. We—we were very fond of each other. And should have been married years—I mean—well, quite a time ago. But he lost a lot of money in some tiresome fashion. I never understood the details. And he went down to South America, somewhere, to make a new start. And then—— Well, after he'd been gone a while I had to amuse myself somehow, you know——"

"Did you?" we interrupted severely.

"Yes," she said. "Why not be honest? Do I look like an ascetic?"

"Certainly not," we said with warmth. "And so——"

"And so," she continued, "I met another man—and rather fancied him. He fancied me, too. The first was so far away, you see. And so uncertain."

"It's clear enough," we said. "You were off with the old love and on with the new."

"You are brutal," she said, but she hung her head.

"Well, and then?" we probed.

"Then the new——" She bit her lip and considered. "The new love turned out not to have much attraction, except for its novelty. The old was always popping up in memory to rebuke me. But of course I'd written him, and returned his ring—the ring I'm wearing now—and asked his blessing and forgiveness. So that was over and done with."

"At least, that was what I thought. I never got an answer to my letter. But one day he telephoned me. He'd come back. And when I heard his voice I knew I'd been a faithless little fool."

She swung her small foot, and made the ring sparkle, and peeped at us anxiously to see how we were taking it.

"Splendid!" we applauded. "So the old love had more to offer than novelty, hey?"

"I don't know," she said. "It—it doesn't seem to have aged at all, as a matter of fact. It seems to have kept its novelty. I expect that's because it was real."

"No doubt," we said; and added with malice, "But aren't you afraid——"

"Of what?" she said, and assumed an attitude of proud defense.

We did not answer, but eyed her ironically until it dawned upon her that she had fallen into a little trap, whereupon she gave that liquid, throaty chuckle we enjoy hearing and said:

"So you think my case proves yours?"

"Why not?" we propounded. "What need we be afraid of if you have nothing to fear? If you find enduring charm, novelty, what you will, in the revival of an old romance, don't you think other people may do so, too?"

"You're a casuist," she charged. "What has my romance got to do with the stories in your magazine and the people who read them?"

"Well," we said, "our stories are romances, too, you know."

"Still, I don't quite see——" she protested.

"Oh, yes, you do," we declared. "Admit that our point is far-fetched, if you will. Still it's pretty enough to have been worth making. You have just said that your old romance has lost none of its novelty through age. You think that's because it was worth while and meant to endure. Well, what of other things worth while and meant to endure—old houses, old pictures, old scenes, old books and stories? Can't they have perennial charm, incorruptible novelty, too?"

"Yes, but look here! If I want to read a story again, I can go to a library——"

"The library may not own that story. Or it may be loaned out. Not all good stories are forever accessible to everybody. And then, look at the trouble of going to the library. You might forgo the pleasure of reading your story because you were too indolent to look it up."

"I suppose that's often true."

"Then again, have you read all the good stories ever written? Certainly not. And wouldn't you like to have a few of those you've heard of but never read served you now and then? Of course you would. True romance, true beauty, are always delightful. Whether you have experienced them before, or whether they appear to you for the first time, makes small difference. They surprise you with agreeable emotions no matter how often you turn to them. Isn't it so?"

"I suppose it is," said our Confidential Critic, and she fingered her diamond token tenderly.

* * *

WE have reproduced the foregoing episode chiefly because it holds the germ of a pretty little love story—and love stories are worth capturing and exhibiting be they ever so trivial. We have also mentioned our talk with the Confidential Critic because it falls apropos of a matter we had in mind for brief discussion, to wit the editorial program which, starting with this issue, will guide the making of AINSLEE'S.

According to this program we are going to give you, every month, stories that have been read in the past with pleasurable emotion and which, we are sure, will still be read with unabated pleasure as often as they meet the eye of taste. Lest you take fright, let it be said at once that we are not going to do this with an educational purpose, although it isn't possible, of course, to purvey good writing without communicating wisdom. If therefore you find that the contents of AINSLEE'S, present and future, has a cultural value, pray believe that there is no malice in it.

Our object is and ever will be to provide entertainment within the limitations of good taste; to beguile your mind from monotony; to bring you relief from the deadly, pounding cadence of reality in the bright and varied measures of romance. Therefore we will sound no classical note, for we are heartily content to leave the treatment of insomnia to the medical profession.

What we propose is to search and comb the more or less forgotten corners of the past and bring to light good reading wherever it can be found. As we suggested to our Confidential Critic, nobody has read all the good fiction ever written. On the contrary, very few people—even among literary professionals—have read a respectable proportion of the engaging writings in the treasury of the world's literature.

In preparation of the program that AINSLEE'S undertakes with this issue we have been making an intensive survey of the field of fiction, from that rather vague period conveniently described as earliest times down to the present. And we are filled with exultation at what we have found.

Most of the good things we have unearthed, intellectual die-hards to the contrary notwithstanding, were not unearthed among the writings of antiquity. There is a wealth of obscure and semi-obscure romantic literature from the pens of comparatively recent writers that puts our most optimistic forecasts, prior to research, in the shade. You may think we exaggerate, but the pages of this magazine will prove from month

to month that we speak only the soberest truth. We never suspected, until we began adding up totals, how much writing of merit was gathering dust. Our task henceforth will be to blow the dust away.



THE following extracts are illustrative of the stories that will make AINSLEE'S for December a notable issue.

* * *

OH, the London nights!—airless, endless. And the anguish of those haunted hours before dawn. My country ears, so used to silence or the note of birds, strained to interpret London sounds before the break of day.

Hardly any honest individual voices, and yet no moment quiet. Incessantly the distant rumbling of . . . *something*. I could never tell what. It was the roar of London streets by day, attenuated, held at bay, but never conquered—the bustle and clang muffled in the huge blanket of the night.

The strongest impression about it was just of the vague, unverifiable thing being *there*—an enemy breathing in the dark. Sometimes it started up with a rattle of chains. . . . Sometimes the thick air was so sharply torn by horn, or pierced by whistle, that I would start up in my bed trembling, listening, till the dying clamor sunk once more to the level of the giant's breathing.

When I was not delirious, the reason I lay still was sometimes half a nightmare reason; a feeling that the muffled night sounds were like the bees at home in the rhododendron, drumming softly so long as we sat still. The moment we rose up the bees rose too, with angry commotion, ready to fly in our faces and sting. Just so with that muted hum of London. If I were not very still, if I were to rise and venture out, all the stinging, angry voices would rise too, and overwhelm me.

And out there in the heart of the swarm, Bettina. Being stung and stung, till feeling died.

From "*My Little Sister*," a complete novel, by Elizabeth Robins.

YOU'LL be fond of me as long as I'm nice to look at; as long as it doesn't bore you to talk to me; as long as I don't give you any trouble."

"Good God! Why—look at the trouble you're giving me now!"

"Yes, the trouble I'm giving you now, when I'm young and pretty and you can't have me. But when you have had me; when I'm tired out and ill and—and thin, will you be fool enough to be fond of me then?"

"You never came near me when I was ill at Matlock. You call that giving me what Robert Lucy gives me? Robert has seen me when I've been as ugly as sin, when my eyes have been bunged up with crying. And it made no difference. Robert won't mind how thin I am. He'll love me when I'm thin, and ill, and old. When I'm dead he'll love me."

"I see your point. You think you're exchanging a temporary affection for a permanent one. You admit that I shall love you as long as you're nice to look at. Very well. You'll be nice to look at for some considerable time. I shall, therefore, love you for some considerable time. Robert Lucy will love you just as long as he believes in you. How long will that be?"

From "*The Immortal Moment*," a three-part story, by May Sinclair.

* * *

ONE of his hands fell kindly on my shoulder, while the other slipped into my overcoat pocket, and I suffered him to deprive me of my weapon without a murmur. Nor was this simply because Raffles had the subtle power of making himself irresistible at will. He was beyond comparison the most masterful man whom I had ever known; yet my acquiescence was due to more than the mere subjection of the weaker nature to the stronger. The forlorn hope which had brought me to the Albany was turned as by magic into an almost staggering sense of safety. Raffles would help me after all! A. J. Raffles would be my friend! It was as though all the world had come round

suddenly to my side; so far therefore from resisting his action, I caught and clasped his hand with a fervor as uncontrollable as the frenzy which had preceded it.

From "*The Ides of March*," a story of "*The Amateur Cracksmen*," by E. W. Hornung.

* * *

MISS ALLONBY was that afternoon in a mighty cruel humor. Though I had omitted no reasonable method to convince her of the vehemence of my passion, 'twas without the twitch of an eyelash that she endured the volley of my sighs, the fusillade of my respectful protestations; and perfect candor compels me to admit that toward the end her silvery laughter disrupted the periods of a most elegant and moving peroration. And when the affair was concluded, and for the seventh time I had implored her to make me the happiest of men, the rogue merely observed: "But I don't want to marry you. Why on earth should I?"

"For the sake of peace," said I, "and in self-protection. For so long as you remain obdurate I must continue to importune, and presently I shall pester you to death."

From "*The Casual Honeymoon*," by James Branch Cabell.

* * *

I HAD conceived how, with the senses ensnared by the seductions of the hour, a man might stumble upon love. A tepid atmosphere; the scent of flowers; the song of birds; in your eyes the sunlight, and the springy turf to your feet; a mind well rid of care, and a heart that sings within you to the lilt of nature's melodies—then let her appear, and whilst the poetry that the time affords doth lull you the thing may come to pass.

But it came not thus to me. 'Twas chill October, and the trees stood gaunt and stripped, mere frameworks of their summer glory; the ground was hard with the touch of an early frost; the sky dull and sullen. There was scant poetry in the hour, and my nose I'll swear

was blue with the sting of the blast that faced us from the Grampians. Thus did love find me; in a flash it came as, wrapped tight in my cloak, I stepped along beside my lady, 'neath the wall of the castle of Bailienochy.

From "*The Fortunes of Lal Faver-sham*," by Rafael Sabatini.



HAVE you ever heard of a "Book Lovers' Tournament?" Probably not. Neither had we, until it occurred to us that there might be such a thing. Whereupon we set ourselves to imagine what it would be like. And our imagination evolved a very satisfactory scheme of literary sport. Accordingly we invite you to break a lance.

You will find the lists set in the December issue of AINSLEE'S. Under the style "A Book Lovers' Tournament" you will find a complete story whose title is withheld and whose author is left anonymous. Nothing in the story will be altered; nothing will be left out except the title. It will be a typical story by an illustrious author. But, having in mind numerous striking examples of how gloria mundi transits, we wonder whether you'll find it the easiest thing in the world to detect the author of the mysterious story and mention the title he gave it. We think the job difficult enough to test the mettle of any book lover.

Of course, it's all for honor. Nevertheless if, having cleared the mystery, you can tell us, in a particularly meritorious letter, how you did it, and add some profound, critical commentaries for good measure, it may be that glory will not be your only guerdon.

The rules of the tournament will be published in full detail in connection with the anonymous story.

* * *

THE December number will be on the news stands, by the way, in time to bid for inclusion in your Thanksgiving pæans.

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"Before I began taking Fleischmann's Yeast my face and chest were in a terrible condition with pimples. Finally one day a young woman asked me if I had ever used Fleischmann's Yeast. After all my failures I thought I might just as well experiment some more . . . After taking Fleischmann's Yeast for three or four months my skin began to be softer and better to look at. Soon my friends began remarking about the change. Now I am in perfectly healthy condition."

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Clear eyes, strong bodies, a new zest in living—all through one simple fresh food

NOT a "cure-all," not a medicine in any sense—Fleischmann's Yeast is simply a remarkable fresh food.

The millions of tiny active yeast plants in every cake invigorate the whole system. They aid digestion—clear the skin—banish the poisons of constipation. Where cathartics give only temporary relief, yeast strengthens the intestinal muscles and makes them healthy and active. And day by day it releases new stores of energy.

Eat two or three cakes regularly every day before meals: on crackers—in fruit juices or milk—or just

plain. For constipation especially, dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) before breakfast and at bedtime. Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days. All grocers have Fleischmann's Yeast. Start eating it today!

And let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Health Research Dept. Z-22, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.



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"I WAS A CHRONIC SUFFERER from constipation and a slave to cathartics for years. A cousin induced me to use Fleischmann's Yeast. He had taken a trip to Europe, and while in Germany he had visited a specialist for stomach trouble and constipation. This specialist informed him that the real treatment for his case was to be found in his own country—just plain Fleischmann's Yeast . . . I now have no more headaches. My body is all cleared up from pimples and all other eruptions of the skin. That dull, hazy and dizzy feeling that used to pass over me several times a day and ruin my life, efficiency, and disposition, has entirely left me."

M. A. ZEFT, Electra, Texas

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After Death—What?

That's the mystery. But don't get excited. You don't need to worry if you play the game square. You were given a good body to care for on earth. You were told to spread happiness, but *keep your body clean*.

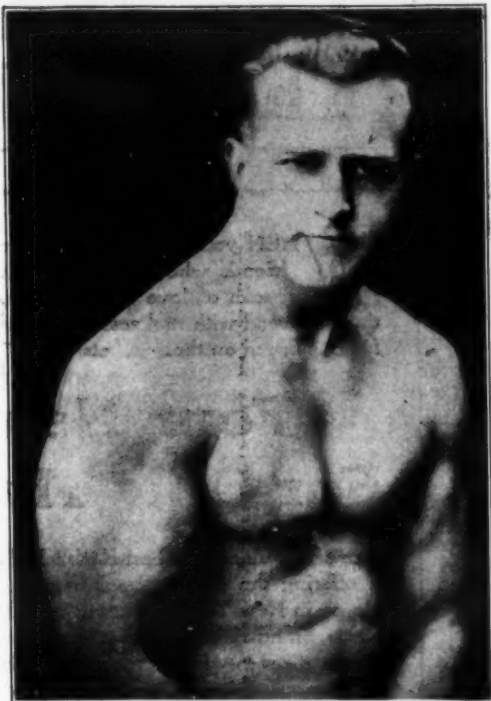
Are you doing it? You are not. You've gone in for every possible kind of self-indulgence. You never stop to consider the consequences. Are you playing the game square? You're cheating both your Maker and yourself.

HOW TO LIVE

Cut it out, men! Why not be square shoot-out? Don't you realize what it means to *enjoy*? Do you know you will really enjoy life better and live longer? Sure, you have to give up some things, but think what you get in return: I would give up a dime to get a dollar any day. The difficulty is, you are so chuck full of germs and decayed tissue now, it would take you years to even get back to normal.

But listen, fellows. There's a short cut. I found it. I've been showing others how to make it for nearly 15 years. And not only do I chase those disease bugs out of you—and clean all that rotted tissue out of your body, but I put good solid tissue—live, animated tissue in its place. I build out your shoulders—I deepen your chest—I strengthen your back—I give you arms and legs like pillars. I teach you how to breathe so that your lung capacity is doubled. Every time you take a breath, you draw rich pure oxygen down into every last minute cell of your lungs. This loads your blood with red corpuscles which fly around your body in jig time, clearing the cobwebs out of your brain, flushing up your liver, your kidneys and the muscles of the very organs themselves. In less than no time you'll feel the thrill of life shooting up your old spine. You'll feel like fighting a wild cat. You will have the dash to your eye and the snap to your step that will make people stop and say: "There goes a real He-man! Boy! but he has pep."

Is it worth it, fellows? You can bet your Sunday socks it's worth it. And the best of it is—it's a sure bet that you'll get it. Remember I don't just promise these things. I guarantee them. Can you beat that? Try and do it. Are you with me? Of course you are. Well, let's ride.



EARLE E. LIEDERMAN
The Muscle Builder

Author of "Muscle Building," "Science of Wrestling,"
"Secrets of Strength," "Here's Health," etc.

Send for my new book

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IT'S FREE

It's the peppiest piece of reading you ever laid your eye on. I never you'll never blink an eyelash till you've turned the last cover. And there are 48 full-page photos of myself and some of my prize-winning pupils. This is the finest art gallery of strong men ever assembled. And every last one of them is shouting my praises. Look them over. If you don't get a kick out of this book, you had better roll over—you're dead.

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Dear Sir:—Please send me without any obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development." I enclose 10 cents to cover postage and wrapping. (Please write or print plainly.)

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One of the oldest and best-established publishing houses in the country is offering the greatest book bargain on the market to-day. Chelsea House in New York is putting out, through reputable dealers everywhere, brand-new books that have never appeared in any other editions for only seventy-five cents apiece—in special Christmas packages of four for only three dollars.

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QUALITY BILL'S GIRL
by Charles W. Tyler
SQUATTERS AT DABCHICK LAKE
by Ewart Kinabura

WHISPERING CAÑON
by James Roberts
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M-107, 18K White Gold Dresser Ring, artistically hand-carved and pierced design. 7 AAA Quality Blue-white Diamonds. \$4.50

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I know just how Fulton, Langley, Bell and Morse felt when people scoffed at their ideas.

I came in for a good deal of kidding myself eleven years ago when I predicted that shaving cream would knock hard soaps through the ropes.

Now that I'm introducing another revolutionary product, I find that men take me seriously. And when they try this new preparation their fulsome praise makes my sales talk sound as conservative as decisions of the Supreme Court.

Yes, Mennen has another winner. Mennen Skin Balm is fracturing every record of sales growth ever made in the man field.

One demonstration forms a lifelong habit. This is how it goes:

You squeeze a little of the silky balm from the tube (no bottle to leak or break). You rub it for half a minute into the skin just shaved.

First you feel a tingling bite, instantly followed by a surge of cooling comfort. Then you smell a brisk, refreshing odor that clears your head and delights your nostrils.

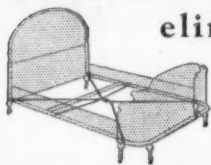
No trace of Skin Balm is left, but there has been definite antiseptic action, and your skin looks and feels better than ever before.

Get a big 50c tube of Mennen Skin Balm at the drug store and call on me for your four bits if you aren't happy with your purchase.

Jim Henry
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Your beds—do they squeak and wobble? Are you annoyed with falling slats, spreading rails, split posts?

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AGENTS

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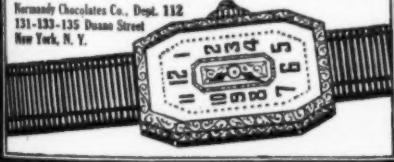
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THE HOUSE OF ROGUES A Detective Story **by Christopher B. Booth**
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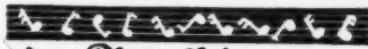
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